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BIRCHLAND

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BIRCHLAND

A JOURNEY HOME TO NORWAY

By
JORAN BIRKELAND

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FIRST EDITION

For My Little Girl

BIRCHLAND

Birchland

I DO NOT KNOW what to call the impulse that sent me to Norway to visit my people there. They certainly did not invite me. I knew I had an Uncle Brage and an Uncle Hallfred and an Aunt Signy, but two of these I had never seen and the third I did not remember. When I was little, I had written letters to a grandmother and gone out on the grassy slope beneath the tree where Father shod the horses, on our ranch in Montana, to pick a certain soft purple flower that grew there to press and send to her, but I had no flesh-and-blood impression. She had died, I knew, a few years before. My grandfather had died even before I was born and the only thing I remember ever having heard about him was that he scolded and maybe even punished my mother when he was teaching her the alphabet because he thought she was inattentive, when, in reality, she could not learn to read the letters right because she could not see them. I do not know how long it was before he realized her eyes were weak and got her glasses.

So it was not because I knew anyone there that I decided to go. And it was not that I was in close

touch with my people in this country. My mother and father were both dead. The last time I had seen them was on the depot platform in a little Montana town one spring afternoon twelve years before. Mother had come up to the State University to see me graduated and we had taken the east-bound train together. She was going home; I was going on. For somehow I had saved enough out of my allowance at college for a ticket to New York—with ten dollars over. Father had not come to the graduation. "You would feel ashamed of me," he had answered to my invitation.

Mother had emptied her purse in my lap just before we left the train.

"Don't cry, Mama," I said. "I'll get hurt, I suppose, but Life hurts everybody some time or other."

I had had moral teachers at college!

"But I don't want you to get hurt." Her blue eyes behind her thick glasses were full of tears as she looked into my face. Her voice was a low cry.

Then the train came to a stop and we got off. Father was in working clothes—a baggy old pair of blue serge trousers with perhaps a coat that did not match, a tieless shirt. His big teeth were yellow from tobacco.

"When are you coming back?" he asked.

"In the fall."

It was true I had signed a contract to teach English in a Montana high school that fall.

"It's just a lot of unnecessary traveling," he said in the severe manner that I knew so well and sensed was only affected and not real.

The brakeman called "All aboard" and I stepped up. I reached the observation platform at the end of the train at the very moment it was passing them. I saw their eyes. Half-smiling, half-tearful. Two old people bent from work on a Montana ranch. They waved. Even Father's severity relaxed enough to let him wave when I was far enough away so it would not be embarrassing.

I knew I would not be back that fall. Nor ever, perhaps. I was going to burn my bridges and break that contract. I did not want to teach. Tears rolled down my face as the train sped past the familiar grainfields of the Lower Ranch.

I never saw them again. Father died suddenly eight years later. Mother followed in four years after a cruel, lingering weakness.

I suppose I went to Norway because I knew I would feel at home there. And I needed to feel at home somewhere.

I wrote to my uncles. "I am your niece," I began. I told them I was coming, and the day I would land. One uncle, I knew, was an archdeacon at a town

four hours out of Oslo. He would be the one to visit first because I would land at Oslo and he, living so close, could come to meet me. That was easy.

Getting to the pier in Brooklyn seemed harder. Ten years in New York had enabled me to walk in Times Square blindfolded, and in the Village in my sleep, and on a lonely Christmas Day I could find my way to the Staten Island ferry—but Brooklyn! Fortunately, I discovered a subway which went almost directly to the dock.

The decks were filled with frumpy-looking women and with men in black-and-white shoes. A band played. Many women were in tears.

I looked on and rejoiced. Here, at least, were no tourists. I saw no young college girls about with imitation-leather books entitled *My Trip Abroad.* And no writers going to the South of France to write. These were people going home, yet leaving home. People whose divided roots strained at their hearts from both sides of the Atlantic.

My companions at table were a little old couple from the Middle West and a young music instructor from a girls' school in New England, almost the only one aboard who was not Norwegian. For the old couple it was their first trip "home" in more than forty years.

"Oh, I've been praying for years that some nice people would come and want to buy our lot there

alongside our house so we could take a trip home," the old lady said. "I wouldn't sell it to anyone but nice people, of course. So many people came and looked at it, but they were not nice people. Didn't have a car or anything. But God answered my prayers at last and sent someone nice. That is how we can be taking this trip. Because, of course, Lars' plumbing business hasn't been very good."

Lars was a thin little man of seventy who stamped his foot under the table whenever he spoke to the cultured young musician at his side. He wore glasses and could recite long excerpts from the Bible. Sometimes he would begin talking about things he shouldn't and then abruptly relapse into silence or another quotation. And we came to know, when this happened, that his wife had pressed his foot with hers, under the table, braking him to a stop.

The musician spoke grammatically beautiful Norwegian.

"But how is it you speak Norwegian when you aren't Norwegian?" he was asked over and over again. These people who had saved steadfastly for years, praying and working for a chance to get a trip back home to Norway, could not understand how anyone but a Norwegian would care to learn the language or visit the country.

It brought to my mind the strange psychological attitude of the Norwegian-American community in

which I was born—a mingling of shame at being Norwegian, with a consequent feeling of inferiority, and an inability to feel satisfied with what it thought was American. The people who lived across the road from us, for instance, were American. At least they were not Norwegian. Perhaps they were Irish, though my father called them "Yankees." Everyone not Norwegian was, to him, a Yankee. Their children, black-eyed and boisterous, derided us for being "towheads," and my father felt embarrassed when Old Tom happened to be down by the road when Father came driving past so that he had to stop and pass the time of day with him. For English was Old Tom's native tongue and to my father even broken English was an effort. This made my father feel a lesser person than Old Tom. And yet, when Father looked at Old Tom's place, he lost his respect for him. The house was unpainted, the barn was little more than a shack, the farm machinery stood out in the rain and all sorts of weather the year around, and there seemed to be no *plan* to anything he did.

At John's, a Norwegian's, farther up the road, everything was as it should be. The house was big and painted gray with white trimmings. The barn was red and set at the proper angle to the house. The yard was neat. My father and John would stand for hours down by the road talking politics and

crops in Norwegian, or in English that was also Norwegian. But if a "Yankee" drove up they would stop at once and become withdrawn and awkward. They were ashamed to display their native speech and ways, with him looking on.

On the second day out, Lars' wife didn't come to the table.

"She feels a little seasick," Lars said. I stared at him incredulously, for, even though we were nearing the Newfoundland Banks, the sea was almost as steady as land. The third and fourth days, too, were calm, but still she did not appear. Lars was bereft, and forlornly carried out a plate of prunes or a few crackers to her after each meal.

I was suspicious. No one could possibly be seasick in weather like this. I called at her cabin. Lars' eyes brightened when I asked him where it was.

My suspicions were confirmed. It was coming to the table that made her uncomfortable, not the sea. She had never used a fish knife or a fish fork in her little Minneapolis home. I had seen her agony the first day when she found herself in inextricable difficulties. And the *smørgasbord* had discomfited her no less. I could imagine her wishing she had never sold that lot.

We sat in her cabin and chatted. Lars came in too. They told me about their eldest daughter, who had married so well—a cashier in a bank, he was!—and

about Lars' business. He had been having such a time since the Social Security law went into effect. There was so much figuring and bookkeeping to do that he was never through.

Afterwards we went up on deck. It was a brilliant May day. They had rented a deck chair between them that they took turns using. The pianist gave them his deck robe.

That evening we visited the *smørgasbord* together. And afterwards we took her to the Social Hall for coffee. She had some *brusevann* too.

My first reaction to the land was one of amazement and delight at its color. The slopes above and around Bergen, the first port of call, are so incredibly green in May, the pipelike tiles such a glowing red, the houses so shining white. The comparison with the picture postcard comes inevitably to mind.

Utterly unlike an earlier European landing I had experienced at Le Havre, this landing in Bergen was full of music and cheering and tears. The ship's band played old Norwegian songs that the passengers sang, and on the pier a men's chorus led the people there in songs of response. The Stars and Stripes hung side by side with the Norwegian flag in symbolic harmony. *"Ja, Vi Elsker Deete Landet"* and "The Star-Spangled Banner" were sung by everyone with moral rightness, but when they came

to *"Nar Fjordene Blåner"* (When the Fjords Lie Blue) I began to see what coming "home" meant to these people. I heard voices break and saw handkerchiefs appear. Men grinned at each other.

"When the fjords lie blue as earth's violets
And glaciers glisten in the glancing sun,
When lilies-of-the-valley at the wild cherry's root
Stand in fragrant beauty 'gainst the gray cliff wall,
When the streams beyond the alder wood leap and spring,
And the thrush in the pine slopes sings,
Then, ah then, my heart is stirred and I can only whisper
'Norway, Norway, my blessed Norway,
You are a beauteous land.'

"And when I see the people who farm this land
Or work in the mountains or in the fish-rich fjord
Those thousands of men who on sea or on land
In the sweat of their brow bring Norway a crown
The thousands of women who in tender faith
Work steadfastly day after day
Then I must toss my hat, then my heart finds words,
'Hurrah for my people, my mighty people.
Hurrah for my people, my mighty people.' "

If the sky had been less blue, the sun less bright, and the people less earnest and gay, I should have felt uncomfortable before what might have seemed like rank sentimentality. But, as it was, I felt respect

and was glad that I too, in a sense, was coming home.

Like people from other parts of Norway, the natives of Bergen have their own dialect and rhythm of speech. A Bergenser sings his words and his accents have a lighter touch than the other dialects. The temperament of the people, too, is said to be livelier than that of their fellows in other sections. In fact, some old Norwegian historians scratch their heads and grumble that the Bergensers are not Norwegians at all. Bergen, since its founding in the eleventh century, has been a port and a shipping center, constantly open to foreign influences. For centuries it was a Hanseatic town, and Southern Europe too found profits in trading there. The architecture of the town's principal historic building, Håkenshall, is Romanesque.

Other scholars have explained the temperament of the people by the food they eat. Dwelling in a center of the fishing industry, the Bergensers eat more fish than anything else; and fish, they say, supplies the brain with phosphorus and feeds a scintillating wit.

However it is, the Bergensers are different and form a group by themselves. That a man or woman is from Bergen is a common conclusive statement in a discussion of a character. I heard it used for the

first time on the boat by the purser, who had been pursued the entire voyage by a woman from Bergen whose trunk had been lost. The persistence and brilliance of her early-morning attacks had reduced an accommodating and conscientious man almost to bitterness.

But it was not the Bergen dialect that the man on the gangplank used as he, a representative of the Government, began his welcoming address. It startled me when I heard it for—shades of Montana!—in every accent it was the dialect I had heard in the barn and the hay corral at home on the ranch. It was the dialect of the newcomers from Norway whom Father brought from town to help with the haying or the shearing, the dialect I remembered Father defending as the true Norwegian, but which I recalled Mother rejecting in silence.

It all came back to me now. I had paid little attention to the dispute at the time. As children, we were only dimly aware of the differences between Father and Mother. Father, we knew, came from Stavanger; Mother came from Trondheim. Father had gone only to the "sixth grade"; Mother had been a governess. Mother talked quietly. Father thundered.

Mother had married beneath her, as they say. Whether she suffered more from it than Father is a

question. Certainly he was an unhappy, inhibited man. He was happiest in such outbursts as I remembered now:

There were seven or eight hired men at the table. Perhaps it was haying time. Father sat at the head of the table, Mother at his left side. Mother did not always eat with the men, partly because she had too much to do keeping the coffee cups full and cutting up more bread for their engulfing appetites, and partly perhaps because she felt uncomfortable when she did. For, in Norway, *drengene,* or hired men, never ate with the family.

Father usually maintained a tyrannical silence over the table. He worked the men hard and rarely permitted any sociability among them, even at mealtime. This day, however, he unbent and had the table laughing over his description of how they used to eat where *he* came from. We could not tell if he were serious and telling the truth or not. Each had a spoon—a wooden spoon—he said, and they all dipped into a single bowl that stood in the middle of the table. Klabber or *grøt* it was. As they finished, each wiped the bowl of his spoon on his elbow and stuck it in a crack in the wall behind him.

"There was no damn picking at the grub there," he said, "in the way of *city* people."

I remember the arrogant look he gave Mother as he said "*city* people." He was serious enough then.

And always, when he spoke naturally, as he did now, he used a broad dialect quite unlike Mother's speech, with which I was most familiar—for Father talked little with us.

It was this scene that came to mind that day on deck when I first heard *landsmål* used in cultured speech. I realized that that little scene, like the whole relationship between my mother and father, was a good, if simple, index of the social struggle in Norway that had found its expression in a struggle over the language—a struggle that had split the country for more than a generation.

My father had had with him from the old country a deeply inbred feeling of social and cultural inferiority because he had been born and brought up on a farm. No doubt a cleft exists between city and country everywhere, but in Norway this cleft has been particularly deep and broad.* And the arrogance my father had displayed was but a faint echo of a whole new class consciousness in Norway that had arisen from the growing power and importance of farmers in politics as well as in literary and cultural activities. Arrogance, born of long-suppressed resentment, always marks the first growing pains of a class on the rise.

Until nearly the middle of the nineteenth century, the culture of the cities ruled Norway. Nor-

* See Theodore Jorgenson, *History of Norwegian Literature.*

wegian cities, besides their superior cultural facilities and advantages, had the good fortune to be populated by people who stemmed, through Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein, Holland and Scotland, from a European culture which, though not native, was of a high character.* All the cities, naturally, were along the coast, swept by the currents of the commercial world, while the rural regions of the interior were cut off not only from the cities but even from each other by black mountain walls and the long tongues of the sea. These factors, potent in accentuating the differences between town and country, were based on the fundamental fact of geographic advantage.

Then suddenly, about 1840, some folk tales collected by two men named Asbjørnsen and Moe were published, some ballads were reclaimed from a slow downward drift to extinction, and the country people found themselves being praised as the true Norwegians and their language as the true Norwegian speech.

There was an immediate instinctive response to these assertions and before long a wave of what we call nationalism had accumulated. Interest in folk culture rose abruptly. Men of talent in the arts began to look to home for their themes. The Norwegian people were finding themselves.

* *Ibid.*

And the language! Great numbers of people realized that the language spoken by city people as well as by Church and Government officials throughout the country—the language in which everything had been written—was not true Norwegian, but Danish. Hitherto, when a Government appointee, for example, found difficulty in communicating with a farmer, it was assumed by them both that the farmer was a vulgarian. Now it was announced that he spoke not a vulgar or corrupted Danish but a speech of his own, the dialect depending in part upon the altitude and lay of the ice in the surrounding segregating mountains.

And that was the beginning of a hundred years' war—a class war—marked at times by something close to linguistic chaos.

The hero of the war was Ivar Åsen. He led the farmers in a struggle to amalgamate the dialects and find in them an identical core that would serve as a guide in the formation of a standard vocabulary and grammar. With him the problem was one of social recognition and cultural elevation for his class, the farmers, as much as one of national restitution.

The war is not over yet but the native culture is winning. The accent of the welcoming address was symbolic of that. Ivar Åsen died in 1896 but he had many disciples. I was to find that my own maternal grandfather was one, and that my father, in princi-

ple at least, would have found the support in him that he could not find in my mother.

It was a stirring welcoming address and the beautiful clang of *landsmål* filled me with delight. I was indeed coming home—to my earliest beginnings. To the smell of hay in the barnloft, to the Montana hill above the house in which I was born, as well as to a country that had found itself, to genuineness and intimacy.

We were lying-to in Bergen overnight, so we went ashore. One group, followed by a woman from San Francisco who reiterated with prayerful intensity every few minutes that she knew how to *live,* as she described her Easter breakfasts for her White Guard Russian friends . . . her tramps into the hills . . . the cooky jar for the neighbors' children . . . and who went, as she *would,* to Fløien. Fløien is a restaurant on one of Bergen's Seven Hills. *Everyone,* the lady assured her group, went to Fløien. And no doubt it *was* nice, high over the fjord and the old Hanseatic town.

But some of us were repelled by the assurance that we *must* go to Fløien, and wandered around in the area about the pier instead. We strolled across the fish-market place, clean and upswept and deserted now until early morning, and through crooked little streets that rose sharply from the level of the fjord. We found a People's Theatre set solidly be-

hind a rich greensward, and many bookshops.

I had written my uncle, the archdeacon, from New York, asking him to write me at Bergen, in care of the ship. He did. The letter was in my cabin when I got there. But I could not read it. No doubt he had written his sermons for many years in longhand and his penmanship was sketchy. I brought it up on deck next morning and asked for help.

"You'd better come skiing with us," one of my companions remarked when he had read it.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, er—I'd say that it's more courteous than affectionate. But then of course you know your uncle better than I do."

Did I? No, I realized, with a sinking feeling, I did not know my uncle. And I had invited myself to come and stay in his house!

"Don't worry," *Fru* Kjelsberg said. *Fru* Kjelsberg was the former Factory Inspector in Norway and she had stayed at the Rectory at various times in the past in the course of her Government inspections. At the time it seemed strange to me that a factory inspector should stay at the Rectory, but that was before I realized how close-knit were Church and Industry, Industry and Government, Government and Church, in Norway. "Your uncle is a good kind man and you will be welcome," she said. "Is his wife still living?"

"Why, I don't know. I—I think so."

No doubt Uncle Brage had a wife. Aunt—? I did not know.

The heavy, looped cable that had secured us to the Bergen pier fell weightily into the water and we began imperceptibly to move away and back out into the harbor. Many of our overseas travelers remained ashore at Bergen. Others would be getting off at Kristiansand and Stavanger. The final landing would be at Oslo, beyond the tip of Norway and a third of the way up the other side of the country.

The approach to Stavanger, like the approach to Bergen, was through narrow passages among numberless islands. Our ship seemed suddenly like a small excursion steamer as we wound our way in and out among islands with sentinel lighthouses and islands supporting neat little farms and groves of trees. Here, as at Bergen, I thrilled to the color in the landscape and to the apparent homely intimacy of the life ashore. Here were no gray stretches of railroad, factory and wasteland such as I was accustomed to see at terminal cities in the States. Greensward ran down to the water's very edge. Clean, quiet streets led to the pier. Geranium plants filled windows not, it seemed, a pole's length away. The warehouses on the fjord's edge were well maintained and their loading platforms were as uncluttered as so many cottage porches.

It was early evening, and several hundred persons stood on the pier to see the ship dock. Here again were the flags, the bands, the songs.

"Is it this way every time a boat from America lands?" I asked wonderingly.

"Yes, more or less. It's almost a ritual. This time there may be a little more because of *Fru* Kjelsberg and the Chicago choir."

We would be here four hours, so everyone left the ship. This time I wanted very much to go ashore. For this time I was going ashore in what was one of my ancestral home towns. It was from here I had my name. Somewhere beyond the pier lay the Birkeland *gård*. All the Birkelands in Norway stemmed, originally, from the Birkeland *gård* near Stavanger. From Birkeland—land of the birches.

Here Father had stood one day, a lifetime ago. Had he a suitcase? He had certainly not had a trunk.

For there had been many children in the family and he had been the third eldest. There would be little for him on the old farm. The eldest son always succeeded to the farm by allodial right.

I knew practically nothing of my father's family. In Mother's and Father's bedroom at home on the ranch had hung a framed picture of the family that had come one Christmas when I was almost too young to remember it—a large picture with two old people sitting on chairs in the foreground, a man

with whiskers and a hat on, and an old woman in a black dress. Behind them stood two rows of solid-looking men and women—Father's brothers and sisters. Their names were written in the lower margin of the picture. Sven stood first. Then Svanhild? Ingeborg? I could not remember.

The only other thing I knew about the family was that Father's mother was dead. That message, too, had come to our Montana ranch one winter day. I remember Father standing at the bedroom window, his back to the room, looking out over the grainfield that stretched away for a full mile toward the tiny railroad station down the tracks. He stood there a long time. Once I saw him dry his eyes with his hand.

"Father is crying!" I remember thinking in surprise.

It had been a long time ago that he had stood there with his scant baggage beside him, ready to set out for America. He had landed with seventeen cents and had got work in a cobbler's shop. A few years later he had gone West to Montana where he got work on a farm owned by a man from Trondheim, my mother's brother Jakob. I was to hear more of that.

We walked up a narrow crooked little street, past the gray and weathered frame warehouses facing the fjord. Honeysuckle bushes were in bud. My com-

panion was an employee in Oslo's Psychiatric Clinic. She was telling me about the use of music in treating psychological maladjustments. Behind us the masts and stacks of ships in the harbor looked like a fire-ravaged forest.

We were approaching the cathedral. Stavanger's cathedral is, next to Trondheim's, the finest in the land. A large Gothic window enclosing four slender Gothic arches below and three circular sections above, faced us in a gray wall, between two square towers that terminated slenderly in nothing. Inside, on either side of the chancel window, were two vestment chambers where, in the ancient past, the priests had kept their heavy ceremonial robes, and which, in later times, had become a general sacristy and meeting room for the vestry. On the walls were paintings of bishops and preachers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with their wives and children. Even the stillborn children and children that had died in infancy were represented.

Before the Reformation the cathedral had been called Saint Swithin's. The Reformation found it still incomplete. Construction ceased and a period of disintegration followed as the wealth of the Catholic bishops melted away. Reconstruction began in the sixteenth century, but the rich beauty of the old chancel window is only dimly suggested in the later portions.

I sat on one of the cold benches and wondered if my father had ever been there. Had a country boy with black, wavy hair and white skin stood there by the door and gazed at this lovely window, let his eyes follow the ascent of its gentle, lofty lines? In my heart I called him. There was only a gray, cool silence.

A little park lay beside the cathedral. My companion told me whom the statues represented. A thrush flitted low through the shrubbery as we walked.

On the way back to the boat we stopped at a little shop and I asked to see the telephone directory. I wanted to see if it listed any who bore my family name. I found many: shoemakers, professors, farmers, preachers. . . . (A man's occupation always accompanies his name in Norway.) Which ones, if any, were my father's brothers? Where were my roots? I did not know.

"How did you like your home town?" I was asked when we came aboard.

"I liked it," I said.

It was still light when, an hour later, the heavy cable again splashed alongside and we moved away. I stayed on deck and watched the town recede.

"It's built of herringbone," I heard someone say.

Spring had laid its mild hand over the surrounding valleys and ridges. I wished I could go walking

among them. Birkeland—certainly there were many tall, slim, white-trunked birches there. There would be violets on that grassy slope, I'd read, and rooster heads, and blue and white anemones. And somewhere among those rolling ridges people had found runic inscriptions. "HADULAIKAR. I, HALUSTALDAR, BURIED MY BOY," was one.

The few gulls that had followed across the Atlantic had, it seemed, been joined in the last twenty-four hours by hundreds of others that swooped and sailed ceaselessly all around us.

Uncle Brage had said in his letter to Bergen that he would not be able to meet me. Oslo was, he said, four hours away by train!

"But," he wrote, "you have several cousins in Oslo. Two are civil engineers and my own two married daughters live there. You could call one of these and they could advise you about hotels. Or if you cannot reach them by telephone, I suggest that you stay at the Hotel for Foreign Missionaries.

"You also have an aunt in an old ladies' home but she is old and decrepit. Perhaps you will want to drop in and greet her."

Stay at a hotel for foreign missionaries? An aunt in an old ladies' home?

"Dear God," I breathed, "let these weeks go quickly. I want to go back to the States!"

My friends on the ship were in paroxysms of glee.

"I hope you like the Hotel for Foreign Missionaries," they shouted. "But be careful!"

The Americans among them no doubt envisioned a hotel for foreign missionaries as I did—a dark, somber building; a bleak, long-faced man at a desk; bleak, long-faced men and women in the lobby.

"You'll probably all join hands and sing a hymn before and after registering," someone said.

There were several thousands at the Oslo pier. Again the bands played, again several choruses sang, again the captain spoke, again we heard a welcoming address. (This time it was *riksmål,* not *landsmål,* we heard.) I looked around for signs of the ennui I was beginning to feel. I saw none. Norwegians patiently observe all the forms.

The customs inspector asked me if I had any *skintoi.* I didn't know whether that meant fur or leather, but I shook my head. He went through my bags.

My fellow passengers were being quickly absorbed by welcoming relatives. I looked for the exit and a taxi.

There seemed to be no main stream of people anywhere. Those remaining on the pier stood leisurely about, chatting and laughing. I was bewildered by the lack of rush and hurry.

Gradually, I became aware of an ordered, uncrowded line of people calmly awaiting their turn

for a taxi. At long intervals, one would drive up. It was, to an American, a strange scene for a country's metropolis.

My acquaintance from the Psychiatric Clinic had warned me before we came ashore that I might have difficulty getting a room in a hotel that night, since it was *Pinse aften.*

"And what is *Pinse aften?*" I asked her.

Pinse aften, she explained, was the eve of Pentecost or Whitsunday, the seventh Sunday after Easter. Didn't we observe Pentecost in America? In Norway, it was a festive occasion. City dwellers took holidays in the mountains, or came to Oslo, the capital. Country people came to town.

Finally my turn for a taxi came and a man standing near by helped me get my baggage in.

"Vaer so god," he said.

I remembered the expression *Vaer so god* and now I was beginning a period when the term was to be as present with me as the air I breathed, almost. "Be so good," it means. The waitress murmurs it when she sets an empty plate before you, when she offers you the food you ordered, when she gives you your change, when she pulls back your chair. The man who opens the door for you bows and says *Vaer so god.* The conductor on the train says it when he hands you back your ticket after examination. The man or woman whose guest you are says it. The

clerk in a shop says it when she invites you to examine her goods. I believe a swimmer says it when he lays down on the beach a man he has rescued from drowning.

Nothing impressed me as I rode from the pier to the hotel. I sat back and thought, "Oslo. This is Oslo." It meant nothing. I remembered only that Mother had called it Kristiania and that Oslo was the old name, the name it had before Denmark began ruling the country. *Oslo* was the country people's name for it—*landsmål.*

But I was not too tired to feel surprise when the taxi stopped outside the Hotel for Foreign Missionaries and I found myself seeing a striking, modernistic building that suggested gaiety and lightness. My surprise grew as I stepped in and found a bright, crystal-lighted lounge with bright bands of color inviting me to the desk, to the silent elevators, down cheerful halls. I seemed surrounded with glass walls.

It was a delightful introduction to modern Norwegian architecture and decoration, their functionalism and cheer. It was also the first time I had found anything not lugubrious associated with the Christian missionary spirit. The Church has the support of the State in Norway and can afford such peccadilloes. When a changing world withdraws that support in Norway, perhaps there will be only Gideon Bibles in hotel bedrooms there too.

There was no room to be had. The town was crowded with visitors. The desk clerk obligingly began calling other hotels for me. At last he found one that could give me a room.

The taxi driver, who had been waiting outside for me while I tried my luck, took me there, and when I gave him a fifty-øre piece for "drinking money," he looked surprised and grateful. I am sure he would not have objected if I had given less. There is less visible tussle in Norway.

I was beginning to feel the strain of talking a language that was only in my ears and eyes and blood and not in my tongue. Aboard ship it had always been possible to lapse into English and find relief, but now I had to sink or swim. My jaws ached, my neck ached, my head pounded.

I was shown to my room. A high bedstead covered with a down-filled featherbed greeted me. Lace curtains hung to the floor. Lace doilies lay everywhere. Against one wall was a washbowl, looking strangely out of place. The porter turned both taps to show me that one was hot, the other cold. The air was icy.

It was a strange hotel room. When I asked the clerk if it had a bath he did not know what I meant and explained that in two or three days I could have a bath but for the present the bathrooms in the hotel were all rented.

"Rented?" I said.

"Yes. All the lower priced rooms are taken and we have rented out the bathrooms for sleeping rooms."

I learned later that a spring and mattress were placed over the tub and—presto—a bed!

I had been there only a few minutes when I was called to the telephone.

A rapid, pleasant man's voice announced the speaker's name. I had never heard it in my life. Nor could I understand anything he said.

At last I caught the words "*Tante* Signy." Someone, now at Aunt Signy's, was coming to get me. I should check out of the hotel at once, he said, for *Tante* Signy had a room at a *pensionat* for me.

Was Aunt Signy the "old, decrepit aunt" who lived in an old ladies' home? Was I going to an old ladies' home now?

I was. The boyish young man who arrived was the eldest son of a cousin I had somewhere in the land. Aunt Signy had heard from Uncle Brage that I was coming and she had sent a cousin's son to meet me at the pier. But someone there had told him I had gone ashore at Stavanger saying it was my home town and had not returned! He had reported my strange disappearance to my Aunt Signy and they had located me through the clerk at the Hotel for Foreign Missionaries.

My cousin's son. He was twenty-five and had never heard of me.

"How are things in America?" he asked in the taxi as we rode to Rosenkrantz Gate to the Home where Aunt Signy was waiting for us.

"Oh, we have a progressive administration now," I told him, "and things are getting better."

"I meant with the family," he said.

To his amazement, I could tell him nothing about the family. No, I had never met his grandmother—my aunt. I had seen two of his uncles about fifteen years ago.

"Don't you even meet together at Christmas?" he asked in astonishment.

I thought of the long stretch between New York and Montana but I realized my headshake conveyed nothing of these to him. I believe he wondered if I were not an impostor.

Aunt Signy awaited us on the walk that ascended the sloping street beside the high brown board fence that shielded the institution. She greeted me coolly. She was all in black, like so many old women I was to see in Norway. She wore a black veil around her hat, and black gloves, and carried an umbrella though it was a clear spring evening. A black velvet band encircled her withered throat. Her eyes were blue and wide and belied her cool manner. Her nose

was very red with thousands of tiny blood-sprung veins.

"Velkommen til dit moder's land," she said and, drawing off her black glove, gave me her hand.

We entered through the heavy wooden door that opened into the grounds.

My surprise at finding a hotel for missionaries that was gay and modern was repeated now in finding an old ladies' home that was not depressing. I had been born and brought up in a land where in many States public old people's homes were still synonymous with disgrace and despair. "Poorhouses," they were called. To have to live in one was too appalling to bear thinking about, for the average person.

It was strange, therefore, to find myself being ushered in here with dignity and grace. No one seemed embarrassed or ashamed. My instinctive impulse had been to pretend I did not know it was an old ladies' home, and so lighten what I felt must be a difficult situation for Aunt Signy, but there seemed to be no need for such pretense.

We entered a neat, white-graveled court. A brown frame house was set well back among trees. A maid in a fresh, bright uniform opened the door and we stepped in. Brilliant gladioli stood on the table in the simple entrance hall. The floors were painted and the paint had worn off in places, but they were

clean. At the head of the linoleumed stairs, in the hall lounge, sat several of the residents. I recognized them at once as residents and not "inmates." Old, black-garmented and serene, they rested beside the lace-curtained window in the clear evening light, like venerable nuns without penance and without care.

I thought of an old lady I had met in a rooming house in New York. She had been about the age of these old women, and like them had withdrawn from the world. But she never sat in the hall with companions of an evening. She always hurried through the halls, and closed her door quickly, for a rooming house was full of frightening things for an old lady. She cooked her own miserable meals on a gas-plate in a closet, and lived in dread that her life might last longer than she had money to pay for. She had been a successful dressmaker in a fashionable Madison Avenue location in her day, and had had a large staff of people working for her. But her eyesight gave out and a shifting population ruined her business. She had always lived frugally, saving feverishly against old age, but now that old age was upon her—she was eighty—she felt as insecure as ever. Her loneliness was peopled with phantoms to which she had entrusted her savings. What if the bank should fail? Many banks had failed. What if she should become ill, as her sister had. with cancer?

Who would take care of her? Where would she go? Her nieces and nephews had all they could do to support themselves. She could not bear to burden them. Her old eyes were bright with fear as she talked of these things one day when she had timidly asked me to sit down to a cup of tea with her.

"How nice it is here, Aunt Signy," I said. The musty odor was not too bad.

Aunt Signy smiled.

"Yes, I have everything I need. I did the best I could when I was able and when I couldn't do any more, I got in here."

Where had I heard that before? "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need."

Aunt Signy's name stood on a handsome brass nameplate on her door. We went in. It was a small room and this window too was hung with long lace curtains. The little bed was high, and mounded with eiderdown. A snowy crocheted bedspread covered it. The furniture was heavy and highly polished. A green plush sofa stood against one wall and above it hung dozens of photographs framed and under glass. I was to see many such walls in every part of Norway I visited. Family ties are strong and good decorative taste not universal.

But it was warming to see them, all these old photographs. I recognized some. Their duplicates had stood on the piano at home on the ranch or lain in

the green plush album that had a mirror in the cover and a music box in the base. Uncles, aunts, cousins, grandmother, and the grandfather I knew nothing about whatsoever.

I realized Aunt Signy was studying me as she spread the white cloth over the table in the middle of the room. She looked at my shoes, my hair.

"A distant relation, by marriage, has a *pensionat* next door," she was saying. "I have a room for you there."

A cork popped. Aunt Signy had given Rolf a bottle of wine to open. She unlocked a heavy closet door in a corner of the room and brought out some fine glasses and horn-handled fruit knives, and a silver plate of Nabiscos and fruit. Now she filled our glasses, pouring first a bit in hers, as wine hosts do. With serious charm they lifted their glasses and drank my welcome. It was sweet and warming. How different it all was from so much of what we have at home. The blending of gaiety and reserve that I glimpsed here in old Aunt Signy impressed me more and more as my stay continued. The art with which they make the best of what they have.

After an hour, Rolf got up to go.

"Rolf, here," Aunt Signy said, "almost succeeded in being presented to the King a few years ago. He and another stood the highest in their class in the Technical University in Trondheim. Every year the

student that stands highest is presented to the King. Rolf failed by just a small margin."

I could see that having just failed of this distinction was in itself a distinction.

Trondheim's Technical University (High School, they call it) is the highest school for civil and mechanical engineering, architecture and chemistry. Indeed, it is the only one of its class in Norway. When one has been graduated from the Trondheim Technical University, he has secured the best the country can offer.

When Rolf had left, Aunt Signy drew me down on the green plush sofa. She had begun to accept me and her eyes were merry.

"I want to see if your eyelashes are real," she said. "I've heard that everyone in America wears artificial eyelashes."

I began to understand Aunt Signy too. She could smile at herself, no doubt, but she was delightfully naïve and romantic.

Then, to my dismay and my delight, she pulled a large photograph of Rudolph Valentino out from the compartment in the table. She showed it to me shyly. She had secured it through a magazine at the time of the movie hero's death and had treasured it there in her table, along with old family pictures, all these years!

We sat talking on the sofa a long time. I tried to

give her a picture of how Mother had lived. Of the incredible activity and drudgery of a woman's life on a Montana ranch. Of how my mother had been one of those especially victimized by the fever of exploitation that seized the earliest settlers in a spacious, seemingly limitless land.

Father had been one of the first to take up a homestead on Deer Creek in Montana. Acres of hills and valleys, pine ridges, rolling grassland and bright green sloughs lay there for the taking. To a young man from a land-hungry nation (only one-fourth of the land in Norway will yield to cultivation), where every arable square inch was tilled and treasured, those vast Montana stretches must have seemed fabulous in size and promise. Small wonder he filed claims on too much, so that at the time he died he had several times more land than he could operate efficiently. *Stormansgalskap,* "big-man fever," it is called in Norwegian.

When the first hundred and sixty acres had been cleared, a log house built, the crystal spring in the little gully encircled with a headless barrel, and the claim of ownership proved by a few months' residence, Father was ready to file claim on another one hundred and sixty acres. To make time—for he could file claim on only one homestead at a time—he selected one of his hired men to file a claim for him, and let him act as the nominal owner. A shack

sufficient to satisfy the never strictly enforced homestead law would be built and the hired man would, supposedly, live there a few months. In that way, Father acquired the whole surrounding territory. Land, land, land! He was never satisfied that he had enough. For more land, more room, was the never-ending need of peasants in Norway; and when their sons came to America and found they could have all the land they wanted for the asking, they seized it feverishly, thinking certainly they had found Eldorado—only to find that when efficient social and economic organization was lacking, land was without value and, in the end, was an economic curse to them.

It was the women who bore the burden. It was their bodies, their spirit, that greed for the land violated most. Aunt Signy's body had been violated too, by the hard necessities of earning a living, but I saw in her face, as we sat there on the sofa, a serenity and an alertness that I know Mother never had as she neared old age.

"She always had hired men to cook for besides her own family," I told Aunt Signy. "In the summertime, there were at least eight—eight is a haying crew; and we put up so much hay that we had a crew all summer, nearly. When we were through haying on one ranch, the crew and Mother would move to the next ranch. (Father had acquired three ranches, be-

sides connecting homesteads.) And along with the haying there was the irrigating, so there had to be a ninth man. Then, the camp-tender would be in every once in a while, for Father ran from three to six thousand sheep. And of course at shearing time in the spring, and at threshing in the fall, there might be twenty or more. . . .

"Besides doing all the actual cooking, she churned the butter, made the bread, and salted down and cured the meat. And she always had a garden and did what canning and pickling she could. Then there were the five of us children, with all the sewing and washing and ironing that needed to be done for us. And there were the chickens to feed, the eggs to gather, the hens to set, the turkeys to find—"

"But she never had anything to do with the animals, did she?" Aunt Signy looked apprehensive.

"No, that was one thing she escaped, though I don't see how it happened. For women work in the fields here, and milk cows too, don't they?"

"Yes," Aunt Signy admitted, "they do."

Father's refusal to permit Mother to tend the animals or work in the fields may have symbolized the prospect of elegance and plenty that he felt the new land was to bring.

"The worst part was carrying the wood and water. The men would chop the wood and haul it to the woodshed, but there were many steps from the wood-

box in the corner of the long kitchen, across the yard to the woodshed, and back. We burned only cottonwood in the kitchen stove and the fire in the kitchen had to be kept going from four-thirty or five in the morning until eight or nine at night.

"The water had to be carried, by the bucket, first up the steep side of the gully, where the spring was, to the kitchen, and later, when the spring-house was built, up a steep, wide-spaced flight of stairs. The board that ran perpendicularly from the spring-house floor alongside the banisterless stairs, was smooth as glass from the many times Mother's left hand had grasped it as she swung herself around the foot of the stairs and up the first step or so with a heavy, brimming bucket of water.

"It took a lot of water for all those dishes and for the big milk cans and the milk separator. We always milked seven or eight cows.

"Yet she found time to sing to us too, Aunt Signy—"

Aunt Signy's voice and eyes there beside me had reminded me of those times at dusk just before the men came in for supper, when Mother would sit in the cowhide-backed rocker in the dining room and hold me in her lap and sing to me. The potatoes would be warming in a pan on the middle of the low, flat stove, the salt pork dipped in milk would be fried, the oilcloth-covered table would be set, and

a sweet intimacy would surround us. Mother would sing a song about a little boy who was out fishing in a fjord.

"Help me, dear Father, now out goes the net. . . ."

But Mother could never sit like that for long. The tramp of the hired men coming across the yard to the storeroom to wash was a signal to stop; and it always came too, too soon.

"There come the men!" she would say, and I would have to slide off her knees and she would hurry to the kitchen to begin to "dish up." Mother's walk would become a trot.

"Poor Inga!" Aunt Signy said when I was through.

"Tell me about you now, Aunt Signy," I said. "I can't remember ever hearing anything about you except that you lived in Oslo and, I thought, sewed—"

Aunt Signy smiled.

"No, I guess Inga didn't talk about me either. You see, I am a little apart from the others. You didn't know that, maybe. My brothers and sisters don't talk much about me—"

"How is that?"

"Oh," she smiled, "I have cut a lot of capers in my day."

She was sitting now with her elbows on her knees and her forearms together, her head to one side. Her blue eyes were smiling and serious at once.

"Inga wanted me to go to America with her the last time she was here. I am glad I didn't go."

"Mother wasn't exactly unhappy, though," I said.

"No, she had probably lost all capacity for feeling," Aunt Signy said curtly.

I realized the dreadful truth of that. The emptiness and drudgery of her life in those vast hills had sucked her sensibilities away.

"Now you must go to bed," Aunt Signy said. "I'll take you over to your room."

Fru Akersborg's *pensionat* was next door. We opened a heavy street door and began climbing a long flight of barren concrete stairs. The *pensionat* was on the third floor.

A red-cheeked maid let us in. Aunt Signy sank into a chair in the hall, gasping. I saw her close her eyes and press her breast. Her nose and cheeks were blue from the tax her effort had put upon her bowed old body. I felt frightened.

In a few moments she recovered.

"It's my heart," she said, "I can't climb stairs very well."

Her goodness in having come with me embarrassed me.

The proprietress came in—a handsome woman in

black. She had been in America some years back and could speak and understand a certain amount of English. She showed me to a tiny room, the whole end of which was taken up by one huge window. A lace curtain hung to the floor. The walls were painted red. The few pieces of furniture were heavy. A curtained commode stood by the door. In the morning, the *frue* said, all I had to do when I wanted warm water was ring for the maid.

Aunt Signy sat awhile with me, smiling at my fatigue. Then she drew on her black gloves and, umbrella in hand, went slowly down the barren stairs and back to her room in the Home next door.

I lay down on the bed. It was the only hard one I was to have in Norway. The towering window before me rose and fell, rose and fell, in the rhythm of the sea I had just left. Now and then a "crosswise" current set in and my bed would tilt first to one side, then to the other.

When I awoke, the sun was shining in at the window and a tiny chorus of invisible birds filled the air.

It was Saturday. The maids in the kitchen across the sunny interior court, in the wing opposite my room, were talking and laughing and singing. With an inward groan I remembered I was in Norway now, and would have to speak Norwegian again all day. The mere realization made me feel fatigued.

I rang for the maid, and soon she appeared with the promised pitcher of warm water. It was seven o'clock, she told me. Did I want to get up so early? Breakfast was at nine.

I waited. At last I ventured out into the umbrella-hung hall. I had made up my mind not to answer if anyone spoke to me in Norwegian before I had had some coffee!

The doors that lined the bleak, dark hall were forbidding and unapproachable. I rang for help.

It was a large bright room facing the court, which the maid led me to. Three or four old women in black, with black velvet bands around their throats, were seated at the long, L-shaped, food-laden table.

"Oh, yes, the American—" the proprietress said as I came in. I recalled what Aunt Signy had said the evening before:

"*Fru* Akersborg has been very kind. She does not usually take Americans. But because her sister-in-law married your uncle—"

"Does not take Americans? Are we—objectionable?"

Aunt Signy looked at me but did not answer.

The proprietress rose and presented me to the others. I got an unsmiling bow from each. Then there was a heavy silence.

I sat down. The linen cloth was spotless and white, the silver was heavy and gleaming, the vast array of

cold food was neatly arranged in large platters and enormous bowls. Lightly overlapping rows of sliced tomato, thinly sliced sausage of several kinds, squares of brown and yellow cheese, each topped with its silver cheese-knife and encircled with an embroidered linen band, platters of cold meats, bowls and bowls of marmalades and jams, trays of anchovy bordered with slices of hard-cooked egg, heavy pitchers of creamy milk, and many plates of dark bread. Directly in front of me was a large bowl of something that was, apparently, the *pièce de résistance,* for the proprietress selected it and offered it to me especially. *Sild-salat,* or herring salad, it was called. It was a delectable combination of finely chopped salted herring, boiled potato, beetroot, hard-cooked eggs and bits of ham—the whole moistened with vinegar and cream.

The proprietress asked me if I would like some ham and eggs.

"No, thank you," I said and surveyed the banks of food before me.

"What do you have for breakfast in America?" she asked me then.

"Orange juice, toast and coffee," I said. "At a counter."

The others listened critically.

"I suppose you talk *landsmål,*" my unknown uncle's sister-in-law said to me.

"I'd like to learn," I told her. "I think it is beautiful and I like the idea behind the movement to re-establish it but, quite by accident, I have been reading and learning to speak *riksmål.*"

They exchanged glances.

"I know your father spoke *landsmål—*" an old lady at my right spoke up.

"I understand the lower classes are causing trouble in America too," someone remarked.

"Are the lower classes causing trouble here?" I asked.

"Yes, I should say they are. Taxes are so high that respectable hard-working people have scarcely anything left for themselves. Now the Government is even giving breakfast to the school children!"

I had heard of the "Oslo breakfast."

"We are breeding paupers," the proprietress agreed. "Everyone looks to the Government for everything."

Suddenly I felt very much at home. It was familiar terrain. I had heard the same complaint at home a thousand times. I saw at what price economic security had been achieved for Aunt Signy next door.

"Half the members of Storting talk *landsmål,*" someone else said in a grieved tone.

I knew that more than half the members of Storting were progressives.

I had finished my crisp rye wafer with the brown goat's-milk cheese and I asked to be excused.

"Dinner is at three-thirty, if you care to take it with us," the proprietress told me when I got up.

Breakfast at nine, dinner at three-thirty! More than six hours. I foresaw that the schedule of meals in Norway would cause me some discomfort.

"Of course there will be bread and butter and tea at eleven," she added.

I felt relieved. Bread and butter and tea would no doubt help.

Aunt Signy was having breakfast in bed when I arrived. A large tray with a snowy napkin over it, a sprig of lilac in a tiny vase, a little silver-plated coffeepot, and a white egg cup with a yellow bone spoon sticking up out of the emptied shell, stood on the table beside her high bed. She had on earphones and was listening to a musical broadcast. The room was light and warm and the green branches beyond her window were slightly swaying. The old pictures on the wall greeted me familiarly.

"How comfortable you are here, Aunt Signy," I said. "I never knew anyone could live so nicely in an old ladies' home."

"I am happy," Aunt Signy said. "It is good to grow old without having to worry about the money holding out. And I get an invalid's pension, too, from the Government. That's how I get breakfast in

bed!" She spoke gaily. "And how did you sleep in the land of your fathers?"

"Utmerket!" I said. "I didn't even know I slept!"

"I think you are more Norwegian than American, Niece."

"No, I am all American, and all Norwegian."

"I am glad you don't deny your Norwegian roots. So many Americans come over here to flaunt the fact that they are not Norwegians any more. 'Look what we've got,' they say, and stick a fur coat under our nose. Or else they have ugly gold watch chains across their fronts and think they own the world on that account. They are not ours any more. They belong to their fur coats and their gold watch chains. . . . Have you got a fur coat?"

"No."

"That's too bad. Why don't you *get* yourself a fur coat?"

Aunt Signy laughed as heartily as I, and the maid who came in for the tray at that moment looked at us in astonishment.

"Today I am going out! Today I'm going out!" Aunt Signy said to the maid. "I want my best dress and my new hat! My niece from America is here and I am going out!"

She flung the bedclothes aside and reached for her robe. Her voice was gay. Her face looked young.

I went out into the garden while she dressed, and

wandered among the budding lilacs. White marble tables and benches stood amid the trees and shrubbery. The old ladies took their afternoon coffee here when the weather was warm, the maid told me.

When I returned to Aunt Signy's room she was garbed in a black dress that, as far as I could tell, was exactly like the one she had on the night before. She was sitting by the window, her face flushed from the exertion of dressing.

Rolf and a friend were coming to take us riding. Aunt Signy thought I should see the King's palace and Rolf thought I should see the National Exposition being held in Oslo.

In a few minutes Rolf arrived and when he had finished the *kjeks*—the Nabiscos Aunt Signy placed before him—we set out. The friend would pick us up in his car at the Exposition grounds.

A long lane of blue-and-yellow Oslo banners led us to ViKan, as the Exposition was called (*"vikan"* means "we can"). It had been laid out along the edge of the fjord on which Oslo lies and the masts and white sails of all the ships lying in the harbor stood out against the blue sky.

Accustomed to the enormous tracts that constitute most fair grounds, I was impressed with the smallness of this one. It was no wider than a broad boulevard and no more than two or three short city

blocks long. It was my first impression of *smallness* in Norway—an impression that was to recur constantly as I made the inevitable comparisons between my two countries.

"But Norway is so much smaller—the States are so big," I had to say to myself over and over again as I wondered at the differences.

The first thing that struck our eye was a representation of a huge knife-blade that towered over the entrance. It stood for the Energy that would cut through Chaos and create Order and Plan. Beyond it were displayed the products of its creation.

"Oh, I can never go through all that!" Aunt Signy exclaimed as we passed the shining symbol and looked down a long, well-ordered street flanked with the little buildings that housed the exhibits.

Rolf and I made a bargain. We would look at two things: he wanted to see *Dovregubben* (What in the world is *Dovregubben,* I thought). I wanted to see the co-operative exhibits.

"Go where you like. I'm going to look at the children," Aunt Signy said, and set off in another direction. We looked and saw a glass-enclosed nursery where visiting parents left their children. The low furniture was bright and gay and the rooms were filled with things to do. Aunt Signy sat down on a bench beside the glass wall and leaned forward smilingly, her elbows on her knees.

"She's happy now," Rolf said. "Now, where's your co-operative section?" Rolf apparently had little interest in it.

We entered a red-and-gold painted room. A huge painting on glass of it, ran from floor to ceiling. In the upper left-hand corner the gray-faced weavers of Rochdale, England, were shown at their first meeting when they set out to start a store for themselves and get rid of the never-ending debt at the "company store." In the lower right-hand corner their co-operative store—first of its kind—was portrayed.

We passed from this room to a circular room beyond, where the achievements of the Norwegian followers of the English weavers were enumerated. Long rows of statistics and meticulous charts covered the walls and so deftly was the eye led to inspect them that, instead of being tiring, they were actually interesting. Inviting sofas in blue faced the walls and diffused light illuminated the scene. There was no hint of "booster stuff" in the displays—only a quiet, simple story of how a democratic form of economic action had been tried and proved.

"What's so remarkable about this?" Rolf said. He seemed to take co-operatives for granted. "Let's go see *Dovregubben.*"

He seemed to take *Dovregubben* so much for granted too that I was afraid to ask what it was.

We entered a section entitled "State Railways."

"Are the railroads run by the Government in Norway?" I asked.

"Of course. They are a public utility, aren't they?"

"What do the railroad men say?"

"Railroad men? The men who run the railroads, you mean? Why, they run the railroads, that's all. They're run for service, not profit—"

I seized his arm.

"But that's socialism!" I cried.

Rolf laughed.

"Is it? Well, the Government runs the railroads and the fares are so low that everybody travels. Here he is. Here's *Dovregubben.* Isn't he a beauty?"

We had stopped before a new, glitteringly black locomotive. People surrounded it admiringly.

"You'll be going over Dovre if you go to Trondheim and it'll be one of these that takes you there."

Dovre must be the name of a mountain. *Gubben,* I knew, meant "old man." *Dovregubben,* then, meant "old man of the mountain." This locomotive must be the mountain's master. It did look regal.

We went through the railway carriages exhibited with the engine. A narrow corridor led down one side, along a wide-windowed wall; the other side was taken up with compartments for eight. The seats faced each other in each compartment, and a table hinged below the window hung waiting to be

lifted. Over the door of each compartment stood two sets of words, one in *riksmål,* one in *landsmål,* indicating whether or not smoking was permitted in that compartment.

"Always travel third class," Rolf was advising me. "Everybody does, and it's only half as much."

Aunt Signy was still smilingly absorbed in the nursery when we returned.

Out in the fjord, on a tiny rock island several hundred yards from shore, was a building that seemed to cling like a crab to the rocks. That was Dronningen, a restaurant, Rolf told me. I proposed that we have dinner there.

"Are you mad, child?" Aunt Signy exclaimed. "Do you know how much it costs?"

"How much?"

"Too much, you can be sure of that."

Rolf volunteered to find out.

"Two and a half kroner," he reported when he returned. Aunt Signy gasped.

I figured it was about sixty-five cents. With a magnificent gesture, I invited them to dine with me at Dronningen. It was difficult to persuade Aunt Signy to have anything to do with such an orgy.

A long bridgeway led over the water to the terraced restaurant. We stopped and looked over the railing at all the red-brown jellyfish that were lopping about in the gray-green water. They burned

you if you touched them, Aunt Signy told us. When she was a child and had gone swimming in the Trondheim fjord, she used to toss them up on the beach with a stick. They called them "dragon's spit," she said, because they made just a big, burning splotch on the beach.

We had dinner of fresh boiled salmon and potato. We even had ale. Aunt Signy leaned back in the sunny seat by the water's edge and said she wished the ladies at the Home could see her now. Having dinner at Dronningen! Dinner of salmon!

The air was full of gulls that swooped low over our heads, creaking their cries, their sharp eyes on the food on our plates. We threw bits over the railing for them and watched them dive through air and water, screaming angrily at each other. Motorboats plowed noisily past our table and sailboats dipped and bowed. The air was light and limitlessly blue.

After dinner, Rolf's friend and brother-in-law-to-be called for us and drove us to the King's Lookout, outside Oslo. But first we drove down Oslo's princely boulevard, the Karl Johann, for Aunt Signy thought I should see the royal palace at once. An American would want to know where the King lived!

"Are you impressed?" she asked when we had driven by.

I told her I thought it was quite ugly. "But who is the man on horseback?" I asked.

"That's Karl Johann. Charles John to you," Rolf told me. "His real name was Jean-Baptiste. Did you know we had a Frenchman for a king once?"

Jean-Baptiste, he told me, was born near Paris and was an officer in the French army when the Revolution broke out. He was a good fighter and became a general. When Napoleon took the country over after the Revolution, Jean-Baptiste joined him in Italy and served him in his conquest of Europe until at last, by hook and crook, he sat on the double throne in Sweden and Norway as Karl Johann XIV.

"But he had a bad time of it." It was Rolf's friend, the jurist, who went on. "After Norway's separation from Denmark she was supposed to be on a par with Sweden under the joint, or double, throne. But the Swedes couldn't keep to their side of the road—"

Suddenly our brakes screamed and an enormous limousine appeared directly in front of us.

"They still can't!" Rolf exclaimed, when the car had passed.

The big car had carried a Swedish license plate. In Sweden, as in England, traffic keeps to the left instead of to the right, and Swedish tourists in Norway, with their high-powered cars, are a menace on the winding roads, for their chauffeurs are constantly forgetting to keep to the right.

"We'll have to set the *Storting* on them, I guess. That's what we did under Karl Johann. The *Storting* made such a fuss over the Swedes' trespassings on us that Karl Johann decided to respect our ways and took our part. He really played ball with us at the end. He died in 1844."

We were driving up gentle slopes of colorful farm land outside Oslo toward the wooded ridges that surround the town. The sun was still high, though it did not warm much, and the sky was more white than blue. I marveled at the neatness and order everywhere—at the meticulous way in which every building seemed kept up, with its hard, shiny paint and warm red roofs, at the thoroughness with which the land was utilized.

After several hours of steadily steeper climbing, we drew up before a large frame villa, part hotel, part *pensionat.*

The men climbed out, but Aunt Signy and I remained sitting, for Aunt Signy was deep in an effort to recall a poem by Wergeland, *"Det er Min Sjael en Frydfuld Trang"* (My Soul Has Joyous Need"):

> "My soul has joyous need
> To visit Norway's dells
>
> . . .
>
> Come to the beauteous Maridal
> To Kleiven's dizzy portal . . ."

She was lost.

"I'm getting old," she said. "I used to know that. He wrote about this part right here. Kleiven is over that way."

She pointed to some swiftly traveling ridges.

We still had a half-hour's walk to the King's Lookout. Aunt Signy found a flat rock where the path began, and sat down.

"You go on. I'll wait here."

The path led up a rocky terrain through spruce and fir whose knuckled roots crossed the path and lost themselves amid the grass and stones alongside. There was the quickening odor of growing things and warming earth.

We doffed our coats and I looked at my shoes in dismay. I had not known I was going hiking.

Again and again we thought we had reached the top and then found another stretch before us. When we did reach the end of the path, we found we were hundreds of feet above a smiling fjord—Tyrefjord, it is called—where oval islands laden with dark woods swam evenly in the clear, quiet water.

"How wonderful it would be to own one of those and live there," I exclaimed to Rolf in my stumbling Norwegian.

A woman standing next to me moved quickly away.

"Is there anything Americans think they can't do

with their stupid money!" she exclaimed angrily to her companion.

Rolf saw my face redden and laughingly pulled me away.

"I'm glad you didn't ask me for an estimate," he said.

I didn't try to explain that I had not intended to convey the idea that I had enough money to buy an island. I felt it was no use. Too many Americans had been to Norway before me, showing their supposed superiority because of their money. They heard by my speech I was American and they assumed I could have no genuine interest in a sleepy island in a bright fjord.

We stood high on a rock and now looked back on the fjord and across to the high ridges beyond. Over our heads, above the spruce tops, an eagle winged darkly across the sky. We heard its querulous cry. A tiny wagtail flicked on a rock before us.

"Now your *memory* is richer," Rolf said as we started back.

His friend grinned. I did not try to answer them, either.

Aunt Signy was still trying to recall Wergeland's poem when we got back. She was sitting bent forward, her elbows on her knees again. She had a bouquet of wild flowers that a little girl had picked for her. She began reciting triumphantly.

"Hvor styrtende mot Tyris stand
Fra åsen Kleiven iler!
Sa forst ved målet, idraetsmand!
Din sterke vilje hviler.
Som Kolven fra det spaenete stål
Din kraft forfølge vil sit mål
Dit vel, en dåd, a faederland!
En dåd, hvortil du smiler."

It was time for coffee. "Time for coffee" in the cities in Norway is four or four-thirty. A Norwegian would no more omit it than the Englishman would omit his tea. In the country, coffee is at two, for the farmers have dinner at twelve.

There is always a siesta after dinner and before coffee. Today we had gone driving instead of having a siesta. It was a violation of routine to be tolerated only under the most unusual circumstances.

"Ach, how good it will be!" Aunt Signy said.

We found a table on the lawn outside the villa, and a maid brought us the little silver coffeepot without our having to ask for it. Aunt Signy refused to allow anyone to order coffee bread.

"We've spent enough money today," she said.

Rolf compensated by emptying the sugar bowl, one lump at a time, to Aunt Signy's horror. He and she were sitting together on a bench, and at expected intervals he would contrive to tip it just enough to make her give a small squeal of alarm, which she

obligingly did each time for the amusement of two children, who sat near by in paroxysms of delight at her mock fright.

The young jurist's father was a member of the Government board at the old ladies' home where Aunt Signy lived, and she was asking him to intercede in connection with a ruling regarding pay while absent from the Home. For the residents paid a small amount themselves, if they could. Aunt Signy paid twenty-five kroner a month. The ruling required that they pay even though they were away, which, to Aunt Signy, seemed most unreasonable.

"So none of us can go visiting this summer but have to stay there so we can eat all that food we pay for!" She laughed at her own logic.

There was no hint of evening. The sun seemed to stand as high as when we had left Oslo, and over the spruce ridges ahead the dark eagle was still wheeling in the air.

I had decided to go to Lillehammer to my uncle the next day. The express train from Oslo arrived there at two in the afternoon, and my uncle would be free then to meet me, Aunt Signy said. Rolf promised her he would take me to the station.

"Before I go, Aunt Signy," I said that evening when she and I were alone in her little room, "tell

me about yourself. I don't know anything about you."

"There's nothing to tell about me. I was born in Trondheim in the house on Ilen—you will see it when you go up there—and I lived there until I was married. I've been married twice, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"I left my first husband. He was a good man, but I left him."

Aunt Signy's elbows were on her knees and her eyes gazed through the window out into the garden. Her knot of straight fine hair was loose and had fallen upon her shoulders.

"He was a sea captain and we lived in Nordland. That's north of Trondheim. We had a nice little home, but he was never there. He was at sea. And when he did come home it was only for a few days—and he was always so busy . . ."

"And you left him."

"Yes. I fell in love with a man from Oslo who was a tutor in a private family up there in Nordland where we lived."

"Was he a good man?"

"Yes. . . . But he didn't love me."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, he was a romantic. He wanted me more before he got me."

"Did you love him?"

"Very much."

"How long did you live with him?"

"Until he died. He died of syphilis. He said he thought I knew, but I didn't. . . . He never loved me. . . .

"Sometimes he would bring me a poem he had written me while he sat in a café or restaurant, or a sketch he'd drawn. . . . But he never loved me."

"Did you ever try to go back to your first husband?"

"No."

"When you understood, why didn't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Days passed, and soon it was too late. He probably wouldn't have had me, anyway. He's married again now."

"You never had any children?"

"No. Fortunately. The one I loved had a child, though. We were sitting in a park one day watching some children play. He pointed out a little girl and asked me if I thought she was pretty. I learned later she was his child. . . . She was married here in Oslo a few years ago. I saw her picture in the paper."

Aunt Signy's voice was calm and even. She was still gazing out the window.

"He was almost helpless before he died. I took as good care of him as I could. One day when I was in the kitchen, I heard him fall and when I came in I

found him on the floor, face down in a pool of blood. He was dead."

"You never got it?"

"No."

"What did you do after he died?"

"I rented out rooms and embroidered. Lived on coffee." She chuckled. "And slept in a box."

"In a box?"

"Yes, I had rented out all my rooms, so I rigged up a packing box for myself in the kitchen and slept there."

"Didn't the family help you?"

"I never asked for help. They all knew about me, though. That's why I'm a little—apart."

"Was what you did so terrible? When you had so little at first—?"

"That didn't matter to them. There had never been a divorce in the family. I was the first. Divorces are common now, but in those days it was a disgrace. And it isn't easy to be the first. Especially when it turns out badly." Her smile had a bitter touch. "But, child, you must go to bed! It's after twelve! Have you a key?"

"I wish you'd come to Lillehammer and to Trondheim with me, Aunt Signy."

"Ah, I'm not invited, child."

"Neither am I."

Aunt Signy sat down again.

"Don't feel hurt if your uncles are cool to you at first. You see, Americans are very, very different from us—and of course, they've never seen you."

"Are we so different?"

"Oh, I don't know. But go to bed now."

She pushed me out and told me to stop in before I went to the train in the morning.

My bed did not sway and dip in the waves so much that night and I fell asleep thinking of Aunt Signy in a park, watching some children at play.

There was no one at the breakfast table when I slipped in next morning. The long L-shaped table was set, however, and heaped with food as on the morning before. Indeed, it looked like the same table—the same platter of pink ham, the same blocks of cheese, the same baskets of bread with the slices lying in exactly the same geometrical patterns. Even the bowl of herring salad looked as it had the day before.

A tiny silver bell stood at my plate and the maid brought me a silver pot of coffee when I rang.

Rolf came as I was paying my bill. It was nine *kroner.*

Aunt Signy was up and waiting. She had saved some coffee for me from her own early breakfast tray, and beside the cup lay a large silver spoon.

"That's for you," she said, and stuck it in my bag.

"And thank you for all the pleasure you have given me. Good meeting, now."

She gave me her hand.

There were two passengers in the compartment where my seat was reserved. I had come too late to get a window seat.

Rolf piled my bags on the wire racks above.

One of the two women in the window seats addressed me.

"You are American, aren't you?" she said.

"I'm sorry, I don't speak English," I answered. I was tired of being an American. I wanted to be Norwegian. After all, I was.

She looked at me in astonishment. I knew she was from the States.

We sat in silence as the train sped out of Oslo. Soon the other two began to talk, the American in Western vernacular, the Norwegian in pleasant schoolbook English.

"I can't decide whether to get off at Lillehammer or not," said the American. "I hate it when it rains, don't you? And it's rained all the time I've been in Europe. I was in Stockholm on Tuesday and in Copenhagen on Monday and it rained both days. I never saw so much rain. I hope it clears up for the rest of my trip. I wouldn't have come if I had known it was going to rain so much. I've been disappointed in the whole trip anyway, kind of. I don't see what's

so wonderful about Norway and Sweden and Denmark! I didn't like Holland either especially and I thought maybe I'd go to France and Germany instead of to the Scandinavian countries but the man in the tourist bureau was *so nasty* about it—he wouldn't change my ticket without making me lay over three days in Amsterdam. Believe me, did I tell *him* what I thought of *him!* I wish I knew whether to get off at Lillehammer or not."

"Lillehammer is a lovely place," the Norwegian said.

"Well, I hope it doesn't rain, that's all I hope. I've got a slicker along but it's in my heavy suitcase and I hate to unpack it if it doesn't rain. Let's see, what is there to see in Lillehammer, anyway?" She began paging through a Bennett's Travel Bureau pamphlet.

"That is where the Sandvigste Samlinger is."

"Oh yeah. That's a museum, isn't it? One of those fresh-air museums. I saw one of those in Sweden. Is that all there is at Lillehammer?"

"There is a lake—Mjøsen."

"How big is it? We've got thousands of lakes in the West. There are ten thousand right in Minnesota."

I groaned. There was no help for it—I would have to step in.

"What made you come abroad?"

"I knew you were American! Where are you from? Are you going to stop off at Lillehammer? We could get a taxi, I suppose, and get to a hotel without getting wet, even if it does rain. Have you got a hotel reservation?"

I forgot that perhaps I was intruding on my uncle as she was intruding on me.

"I am going to visit my uncle at the Rectory," I said stiffly.

"At the Rectory? Say, that's good. You won't be staying long, I guess."

The Norwegian woman introduced herself.

"I have heard of your uncle. He is very active."

She gave me her card. Secretary to the chief of the Norwegian motion-picture industry, I read.

We began to talk.

"Perhaps you can tell me why the moving picture we made here in Norway on a story by Oskar Bråten was banned in America," she said.

I could not.

"It was one of the finest pictures we've made. I have never been able to understand why it was banned."

"Did it show a couple living together openly without being married?"

"Yes. . . . Was that why it was called immoral?"

"Undoubtedly. Will Hays is for hundred-per-cent Americanism."

My companion looked baffled.

"But they were two good young people—factory workers in Oslo, struggling to get ahead so they could get married and have a family. They needed each other's help."

"These are fine points. We, in America, believe in self-reliance."

"Self-reliance? Those two young people were showing the highest kind of self-reliance."

"It doesn't matter. Black is black and white is white."

The other woman's knitting was lengthening rapidly. She still looked puzzled.

"Are you going to get off at Lillehammer?" the American asked her.

"Yes. I have never seen the Sandvigste Samlinger, although I live and work so near to Lillehammer. I am going to visit it this afternoon."

"Then I think I'll get off and go with you."

"It will be a great pleasure. I shall be free until four."

The American looked out the window and peered anxiously at the sky. It was light, though there seemed to be no sun. We were speeding smoothly past low ridges and hills of billiard green, broken only by the customary red tile roofs and white buildings. Here and there stood a mustard-yellow house, or an old weathered one of unpainted wood. I looked

in vain for the angry black mountain peaks and rushing waterfalls I had expected to find in every part of Norway.

"It looks like rain to me," I said. "Do you think you ought to get off?" It seemed to me my patriotic duty to keep my country woman from imposing her lack of culture any further. "I've heard that it rains more in Lillehammer than in any other place in the country."

The Norwegian shot me a grateful glance. I carried on.

"You see, Lillehammer lies at the bottom of a kettle and the downpour is terrible. I think if I were you I would go straight on to Trondheim and pick up Lillehammer between trains on the way back. It shouldn't take you long to see the museum and, as you say, you've seen a lot of lakes."

"Oh, as far as that goes, I don't have to see this museum at all. I saw one in Sweden."

"Well, if you've seen one museum, you certainly don't want to see another."

The Norwegian looked as if she were about to choke.

"They're absolutely all alike," I said. "I've never seen the limit. I would never be coming to Lillehammer except that I have relatives here." (That part was true.)

The American's face was growing lighter and lighter.

"I think you're right. I declare I'm so tired of looking at buildings and statues and towns and lakes that look like all the others I've ever seen. I'd like to tell the man that fixed up this tour what I think of him."

"Where are you going after Trondheim?" the Norwegian asked.

The American frowned.

"Let's see . . ." Then, "Say, by the way, you won't mind if I don't stop off at Lillehammer, will you?"

"Not at all. I shall be sorry not to have your company, but if you are tired—"

"I'm so tired I could sleep a week. I'm going on from Trondheim to see the midnight sun and I hope I get a good boat so I can get some sleep." She consulted her travel schedule. "Is the *Solar Polaris* a decent boat?"

"It is splendid," the Norwegian said. "I am sure you will get a good cabin."

"I don't suppose the midnight sun is all it's cracked up to be, either," I suggested.

"Well, I wouldn't want to go home without seeing the midnight sun. Everybody would laugh at me."

"It must cost a great deal to travel so far," the Norwegian said.

"It's going to cost me the biggest part of a thousand dollars before I'm through!"

The train was coming to a stop at a station platform. It was eleven-thirty. Time for morning tea or coffee. There would be a fifteen-minute stop.

We found a long chromium-plated table laden with the triangular, open-faced sandwiches I was to see everywhere I went in Norway. What the Norwegians lack in variety in their food they make up for in precision and taste in the way they serve it. Each of the scores of triangular bread pieces before us had its own minute garnish, arranged with the same meticulous care. The coffee cups were thin and white and the coffee came in little white porcelain pots. There were no thick mugs, pale desolate pies, or heavy chocolate-covered doughnuts here! Despite myself, I made comparisons.

"There's a member of the Storting over there," my companion whispered. As I looked, the man turned and, seeing her, bowed.

I had not taken a knife and fork with me from the buffet; my companion went to get them for me.

"Never eat sandwiches with your fingers," she told me, as I sought to support on four fingers the limp triangle of bread with its slipping, sliding pickled herring.

The little lesson took time, and we had to run to catch the train that, without warning bells or whis-

tles, had quietly, definitely, begun to move. Perhaps the engineer had delicately refrained from interrupting our study. Restraint can be carried too far, sometimes.

We had been so absorbed in the possibility of rain in Lillehammer during the trip from Oslo that I did not notice our passing through Eidsvold—a name that, with the date, May 17, 1814, was to every Norwegian school child about what Philadelphia, July 4, 1776, is to American school children.

My association with it went back to a highly varnished clothes-closet door in our house in Montana, where on a Norwegian calendar appeared a picture, in several shades of blue, of a gathering of men to whom another man was reading something. I remember how, as a child, I had been puzzled by the clothes and the haircuts of the men in the picture: the tight breeches, the high boots, the high collars, and the sideburns and beards.

This scene, I learned later, represented the first Norwegian Constitutional Convention. For decades Snorre Sturlasson's sagas of the country's ancient kings had been nourishing a little flame of national self-realization, and the reports of the American and French Revolutions had also brought fuel to the flame. Then an English blockade that severed Norway's communication with Denmark suddenly threw Norway on her own economic and commercial re-

sources, and suddenly she found that, if she *must,* she *could* stand on her own. It was a tremendous discovery.

So when the Swedes lost Finland to Russia in 1809 and turned with greater determination than ever to Norway to find compensation for their loss, they were astonished to find a substantial section of the population articulate and maintaining sturdily that even though the Danish-Norwegian king, Frederick VI, had relinquished his authority over Norway to the King of Sweden in one of the Napoleonic bargains of the times, the Norwegian *people,* no party to the bargain, had not relinquished their authority over themselves. It was strange talk. It came, not from the farmers or laboring people—Norway's social struggle had not yet begun—but from the professional classes that for years had been demanding from Denmark such things as a bank, a department of commerce, and a university of their own.

The militant protest spread and grew intense; and eventually a convention of delegates, to be chosen by the people, was called at Eidsvold to discuss whether the Danish king had any right to turn the resources and people of Norway over to the King of Sweden. Professor Georg Sverdrup requested the Danish Prince Regent, Kristian Frederick, to act as temporary head of the Norwegian

Government until the people's delegates should have time to form a Government of their own.

The meeting was called for Easter Sunday in the Eidsvold church. From the 112 delegates a committee of fifteen was selected to formulate the first draft of a Norwegian constitution, and on May 17th this committee presented the results of its work. The convention voted to approve the document. Norway had a constitution. Instead of being Denmark's pawn, to be passed from sovereignty to sovereignty, Norway had declared herself a nation in her own right. To make good their claims, the Swedes would have to fight.

The rational Frenchman, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, later Karl Johann XIV, felt that nothing would be gained by force and so proposed a compromise—a union between Norway and Sweden under a single throne. This was achieved, though, as Rolf had pointed out the day before, the Swedes from force of habit continued to have difficulty in "keeping to their side of the road."

But I had realized none of this as we sped through Eidsvold, nor was I aware of the rich history that lay hidden in the green meadows and wooded slopes as we approached Hamar.

It was not until later that I learned that somewhere, amid the majestic weeping birch trees we were passing, stood three great columns with mag-

nificent connecting arches of gray-blue limestone—all that remained of a Byzantine cathedral of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the sixteenth century the Swedes had destroyed both the cathedral and old Hamar, the cathedral town. I did not, even in my imagination, hear the measured clangor of the bells that, according to custom in old Hamar, rang out "first from the Cathedral, next from the cloister, next from the cruciform church and last from St. Jorgens Church, when they should all ring and chime together as much as they could. . . . When the weather was clear, one could hear them from a long distance, together with the sound of singing so that, mingling with the sound of the organ, whoever did not have a heart of stone would have to weep with joy. . . ."

Now we were skimming along Norway's largest "inland sea," the lake Mjøsen, and large tears of rain were falling on the windowpanes of our train. It *would* be raining in Lillehammer!

We were there. We bade adieu to the American tourist, and someone began helping me with my bags.

I could not keep my eyes on the steps descending from the train. I *had* to pause and look up.

There he was. My Uncle Brage. His eyes were my mother's. He was bent forward slightly, apparently

in expectation. He half-smiled, exactly as Mother had on the train platform in Montana years ago.

We shook hands. *His* hand was soft and white, not like Mother's.

I identified my bags. A chauffeur took them. My Norwegian traveling companion from Oslo was was standing to one side waiting to say good-by. She was smiling at my excitement.

In the car, I asked him if I might say *"du"* to him. I did not realize until later that it would be wrong to say anything else, but he only laughed and said I might. He sat with his hands over his silver-headed walking stick.

In less than five minutes we were at the Rectory. Uncle Brage paid the chauffeur. I said I could just as well have done that.

"No, you are with me now," he said.

We passed through a white board gate and entered a graveled courtyard. Lilacs hung over the surrounding wooden wall.

The plain entrance hall held numerous wraps. I left my own and followed my uncle into a parlor, the "second" or "daily" parlor. In the light admitted by enormous windows, I saw books, pictures, and a round table of lively red cherry holding a vase of white flowers. We sat down.

My first question was about his language, which surprised me.

"Do *you* speak *landsmål?*" I asked. There was something of the speech of my father in the way he spoke. "*Skjøl,*" he said, for "*selv.*"

He laughed.

"I speak something in between, I guess," he said. "Something of my own."

I wondered when my aunt would come in. "Aunt Lilla," Uncle called her. An archdeacon's wife in a well-to-do section of the diocese would be capable and commanding, I thought. A busy type.

Presently she appeared.

She was commanding, but not because she was an archdeacon's wife. I sensed at once that she was something in herself.

They led me upstairs through a brilliantly white painted hall to a large corner room with a veranda that overlooked the Rectory garden. Lower, and beyond, lay the lake. On its farther side were forested ridges where immaculate fields stretched up to the timberline. The branches of a birch tree overreached the veranda.

In one corner of the room was the typical Norwegian bed—obviously too short, high, softly mounded with an eiderdown cover and heaped with pillows over a hard, triangular bolster.

Near the other door was what was sometimes to be my only comfort in the days that followed: a little cylindrical coal heater.

"Ja, så må du vaere velkommen (Well, then, make yourself at home)," Uncle said.

I sat down and felt new strength seep into my being from roots that had been numb since birth and were now coming to life. It was the strength that comes from self-knowledge.

The dining room was another source of joy. It was a long room, and the two long walls were covered with family photographs from ceiling to wainscot. It was a gallery, but it was not cold.

Uncle and Aunt were standing by their chairs waiting for me. The maid stood by the door.

We sat down. Uncle clasped his small white hands and asked God's blessing. . . .

"Your cousin Erling caught these trout up in the mountains yesterday," Uncle Brage said. "He is up there today, too, at the cottage of a friend. The young people live outdoors here in Norway, you know."

After the trout, with boiled potatoes and melted butter, came meatballs, the substance of which was so finely ground that it had nearly the texture of blancmange; and for dessert, there was—puffed wheat!

In our table talk we tried to draw together the tenuous threads binding a family divided in two cultures, two worlds. Yes, I had a brother named Eystein. Eystein was an old, old name—the name of

Norway's first archbishop, in the twelfth century. In America, it had been only a source of trouble and embarrassment, for no one seemed able to pronounce it. My own name was even older, Uncle Brage said. But it should be Jorunn, not Joran, he told me.

"It sounds like Urine in English," I replied. "That's why they called me Lulu. People warned my mother against the name Jorunn, pronounced as she pronounced it with a liquid J. I was sixteen before I learned what my name was. As soon as I found out, I began using it and pronouncing it quite naturally with the J as in John."

"We thought the baby Jorunn had died," Aunt Lilla said. "We got an announcement of your birth and then we never heard of you again."

It had been a great shock to Mother to learn what she had done in naming me Jorunn. She begged an Irish neighbor in Montana to tell her of a real *American* name. She suggested Lulu.

"Your mother wrote regularly as long as your grandfather lived, but when he died we heard less often. In the last few years, she actually sent us *printed* cards at Christmas! I would rather not have heard from her at all. I'm surprised you Americans don't even have your *name* printed on your greeting cards!"

"We do! When we can afford it."

Uncle Brage looked at Aunt Lilla and shook his head.

When we had finished our dessert, our puffed wheat, Uncle Brage again clasped his hands and bowed his head. He looked like a little fat angel. When he finished, he laid his left hand on Aunt Lilla's right and said *"Takk for matten* (Thank you for the food)."

"Now we have a siesta," he said. "Coffee is at four-thirty."

I knew I was excused. Indeed, Uncle Brage was already lowering himself to the lounge at the left of the table. Aunt Lilla was taking the lounge on the right. The maid showed me to one in the living room. In a few minutes, there was the sound of sleep.

Outside, the world was quiet too. It was a long way from Fifth Avenue and Fifty-third Street. But I felt at home.

Promptly at four the house began to stir. I heard feet strike the floor. Aunt Lilla got up and began to fold the shawl she had used for a coverlet. The maid appeared with coffee.

We drank coffee on the veranda. A warm sun shone. The fruit trees in the Rectory garden were in bloom, though they were old and growing sterile and their blossoms were scant. The coffeepot was simple silver and the half-filled cups were small and

white. There was a large plate of coffee bread.

When we had all had a second half-cup, Uncle proposed a walk to Maihaugen, the site of the Sandvig Museum I had heard about on the train.

It was pleasant walking up the sloping street that led from the Rectory to the rounded hill where, in the past, had been held the May Day celebrations that had given May Hill (Maihaugen) its name. Lilac, mock orange, and honeysuckle lined the walls and fences surrounding the houses along the street. To the left, farther up the hill, was a Red Cross Hospital for tuberculars. Down that street, across the bridge, was the house where Sigrid Undset lived —Lillehammer's other institution.

The steeper path that led from the street and up the hill wound among conifers and birches. Apparently a walk to Maihaugen, after coffee, was a habit with townspeople, for there were many on the path, before us and behind, though the tourist season had not yet begun.

"There is Herr Sandvig himself," Aunt Lilla turned to say. She had been walking a short distance ahead, her full black skirt swinging slowly just above her low shoes. She wore black gloves and carried an umbrella for a walking stick. Uncle Brage walked beside me in his large, black, Quakerlike hat, his stick regularly measuring the ground.

Herr Sandvig, they explained to me, after they

had bowed and passed, was a Lillehammer dentist who, when he first came to town fifty years ago, had begun collecting old furniture and objects from the ancient farms in the Gudbrandsdal section where Lillehammer lay. It was a hobby with him and the townspeople are said to have thought him very eccentric, the way he came hauling wagonloads of decrepit furniture into town and to his home.

But now the townspeople were glad to bow when they met Dentist Sandvig on May Hill, and a Sunday afternoon walk became an event because *he* would be there on the hill among them.

We followed a path along a tiny pond that led to a little brown weathered church. Uncle held open the gate in the low stone wall.

"A part of this church [he pointed with his stick] was built in St. Olaf's time—about the year 1000."

We did not go in. My interest was chiefly in Uncle Brage and in Aunt Lilla, not in St. Olaf. We stood in the churchyard and looked out over the valley that dropped down behind the church. It was filled with spruces and birches and the town seemed to be crouching on the valley floor. Overhead billowed gray and white clouds.

We looked cursorily at a few old headstones and tried to read the nearly undecipherable names. A tiny wagtail thrush flitted along the ground in front

of us, alighting here and there, and then was gone.

"Your grandfather always liked the little *enerle,*" Uncle Brage said. "He used to watch it and smile, because it was so quick."

It was strange to hear someone speak intimately of my grandfather. Grandfather did not exist for me.

Aunt Lilla had gone on. The path followed the pond's farther shore now, among white-trunked birches reflecting their spirit slimness in the pool.

Unnoticeably, the path became a dirt road that we followed through a heavy pole gate and into a kind of courtyard. Old brown houses of squared logs, two stories high, stood facing a rectangular space. This was an eighteenth-century farm, Uncle Brage explained, and the houses were always built like this around an area known as the *tun.* In the center of it stood a large tree.

"But why did they need so many houses?" I asked. They were obviously dwelling houses.

"Because an entire family, with all its branches, lived together on these old farms. They were really little villages and before there were any towns or cities, except the alien settlements at the ports, some of these family communities were already old. Families used to stick together here in Norway, you see."

"Did I know that in my bones? And was that why I dared to come and ask for shelter of you, though you had never seen me?"

"Perhaps," Uncle Brage said, and laughed.

Before we reached the *tun,* we passed a little low hutlike log building with a sod roof thickly grown with grass and flowers. A plank rampway ascended from the ground to a tiny door beneath the roof. It had a massive chimney but no windows.

"That is the *badstue,*" Uncle Brage said.

They explained: In the olden days every large farm had a hut like this for drying the grain. Inside was a huge soapstone stove, and ranged around the walls were shelves where the year's grain was spread to dry in the heat from the fire. Afterward it was taken to the mill for grinding. The fire was started with birch in early morning, then heaped with fir to increase the heat; the firing kept up all day.

"Sometimes," Uncle Brage said with a laugh, "there would be occasion to hang the bedclothes up in the heat of the *badstue*—presumably after the grain had been removed—to rid them of certain trolls. The heat would kill these trolls and then they could be shaken off. But they say they never started a fire just to do that.

"And when the year's drying was done, they made use of the warm room to take their yearly bath—provided it was not *too* long until Christmas. For

everyone had to be clean at Christmas—and one bath a year was enough."

"On some of the farms," Aunt Lilla put in, "they had to dry the grain a kettleful at a time over the fireplace where they did their cooking. It was only the prosperous farms that had a house for it. Think of stirring a whole field full of grain, a kettle at a time! They dried malt that way, too, and it had to be stirred constantly to keep it from burning."

Aunt Lilla was peering through one of the leaded windows of the largest house facing the *tun*.

"Come and look," she said. "Can't you see a tired arm reaching up to swing that cradle hanging there over the bed?"

The interior of the museum house was furnished exactly as it had been when people lived there.

We left the *tun* and took a path descending to the pond. There was a six o'clock feel in the air, though there was no sign of evening. We sat down on some rocks beside the path. Uncle Brage wanted to hear more about how Mother had lived.

I sat on the steps at their feet and told them as well as I could. Uncle Brage drew a long sigh when I finished.

"I don't understand how Father ever let her go to America. She was a governess here. Her generation was the first to see women get posts as teachers. Father had great plans for her.

"But after she married your father. . . .

"She taught me the alphabet. I can still see her standing in front of me, scolding me because I looked out the window instead of at her.

"She was a good teacher. She would not have had to marry to get a home. Why she did as she did, I don't know.

"She and Jakob—your uncle—quarreled (in America). That may have had something to do with it. Your father was a servant at your Uncle Jakob's farm in Montana—hired men, I think you call them—at the time, and one day he drove a team of horses belonging to Jakob into the river. Did you know about that?"

"No."

"He had been drinking, undoubtedly. The river was high—it was spring—and Jakob shouted to him to stop, but he drove head-on, lumber wagon and all, straight into the stream. He was a madman when he was drunk. The horses went down and he jumped. It would have been better if—if Inga had never gone to America."

He jabbed his stick into the ground.

"She was educated to be something better—

"And then when Jakob fired him for drowning the horses, Inga put her arms around your father and comforted him!"

He got up and we continued down the path. The trees, the cool air had an alien quality.

The table was set with a large basket of several kinds of dark bread, a block of goat's-milk cheese, a light cheese with caraway and other condiments in it, a tin of sardines, a pitcher of milk, and a Japanese tea set.

True, I thought, we had had coffee and coffee cakes but three hours ago.

It was still light when we said "Good night," but I fell asleep at once.

When I awakened, I was astonished to see that it was broad daylight. I had overslept, I thought, and they were having to wait breakfast for me! I felt upset, because I had wanted to slip into the routine of the household without causing anyone more inconvenience than I could help. I looked out and realized that, in my sleep, I had heard the birds singing for hours.

I dressed quickly and ran downstairs. There was no one about. The refectory table was spread with the colorful woven piece I had seen on it after the evening meal the night before. I looked at the clock. Four, it said. I had slept all day! They were having coffee!

I ran out on the veranda. There was no one there.

Everything was quiet. I walked into the garden. No one.

A horse and cart were passing. Large bright cans clattered in the cart—milk cans, unmistakable in any country.

I realized the facts slowly. Milk cans in a quiet street: it was *morning!* In June, in Norway. June in Norway. Nights were light in June in Norway. I looked for the sun. There it was, high in a pale sky, far from horizon, far from zenith.

It was four o'clock in the morning! I tiptoed back upstairs to bed.

Five hours later I heard someone in the dining room. Again I dressed and went down. The maid, a red-cheeked native of the region, was talking to my uncle. She was very serious.

"I know I heard someone walking up and down stairs. I got up and looked around but whoever it was was already gone. Then this morning, I saw footprints in the garden."

My uncle turned to me.

"Did you hear anything in the house last night? Anna says she heard the sound of someone walking . . ."

They laughed at my confession.

Aunt Lilla came in and we sat down. Uncle Brage began telling me about the light nights.

"When we were young in Trondheim," he said,

"we used to be able to sit at a window and read all night. Sometimes we would start out on a hike at sunset about ten o'clock and three hours later we would be cooking coffee on a mountain top at sunrise. In three weeks, the sun will not go down at *all.*"

Breakfast was like the evening meal: first and foremost, a basket of bread; then the butter, the goat's-milk cheese, the spiced cheese, the sardines, the milk and the coffee. It was always the same, except on Sunday, when a little wicker basket, lined with white and yellow yarn and holding soft-boiled eggs, would appear; and beside our Sunday breakfast plates would be gay bone or composition spoons —for egg tarnished silver, they explained to me. The meticulousness and regularity in these little things were a delight.

My uncle's office was his study in the Rectory. He spent the day there working, when he was not out visiting his sick parishioners, or conducting a wedding or a funeral—for he was the local pastor as well as the section's archdeacon. Occasionally, in the mornings, a pastor from some other locality in the region would call for instructions or advice, and then the Japanese tea set and fragile pastries would appear.

"The only difference between a pastor and an archdeacon is that an archdeacon has three times as

much office work to do," Uncle Brage said one day, after a visit from the minister of the village across the lake. "And the 15,000 *kroner* I get a year now does not go as far as the 5,000 went when I was first ordained." He smiled at Aunt Lilla. "Do you remember all we did in Kautochino with 5,000 *kroner?*"

When he had left, Aunt Lilla and I sat in the big bay window in the dining room, where a yellow sun shone through the white curtains and upon the red-blossoming plants on the window sill. Outside the window, some tiny birds were eating crumbs out of a pagoda-like dish fastened to the frame.

"I had a lot to think about in those days," Aunt Lilla said. "It was your uncle's first pastorate. Besides serving as pastor, he had to operate the church farm. Up until recently, all country pastors had to do that. Nowadays most of them let other people work their farms on shares."

She went to get some pictures and a map. Kautochino was the name of a section in Finmark, and her finger traveled slowly from the Hamar region, where we were—where the pink tongue of land that was Norway on the map was broadest—up the choppy, fjord-broken, island-bordered Atlantic coastline, and eastward into the Arctic. There, north of Lapland, at North Cape, where the sun shines at midnight, was Finmark.

"I'll never forget the trip up there," she said. "Your uncle had gone up in the spring before. His sister Borghild and I followed with the children in the fall, when the snow came and we could travel by sledge. We went as far as Altenfjord by boat; after that it was reindeer and sledges. We had to wait for several weeks for a good snowfall. A party of Lapps from the Kautochino congregation came to meet us. They brought a sledge and a reindeer for each."

"You mean you drove a reindeer yourself?"

"No, we had nothing to do with the driving. Each of our reindeer was tied to the sledge ahead of him, and only the guide in the lead needed to drive. But it was strange to turn Gunvor—she was the baby then—over to the Lapp woman who was to be her nurse and see her start off across the snow behind a reindeer.

"That night a big snowstorm came up. We didn't know how bad it was until afterward. We heard the guides talking and arguing about something but we couldn't understand their language, of course. We learned later that some of the party had wanted to stop and dig in—the air was gray with snow—and turn the sledges over us and lie there until we could see. Others had thought we ought to go on.

"We kept going—I don't remember how long. Once in a while we would strike a bare spot where the wind had swept away all the snow and we could

see gray reindeer moss and here and there some scraggly dwarf birches.

"When we finally got to the trading post, halfway to Kautochino, the reindeer were so tired that they literally dropped in their tracks. They could not even be gotten under shelter, or made to eat. They just lay there exhausted. That was when we realized what danger we'd been in."

"How long was Uncle Brage pastor in Kautochino?"

"Five years. Gustav was born there. I'll never forget the midwife who helped me that time. How dirty she was! You cannot imagine how dirty the Lapps are, measured by our ideas of what dirtiness is. Their little turf huts, which are no more than dugouts, really, have no windows, and the smell of damp, steaming hides and the smoke from the fire in the middle of the floor were more than I could stand. I tried to teach this midwife our ways, and I made some white sleeves and a white apron for her to slip on over her greasy, filthy clothes when she was to handle the baby, but she would not wear them. She was a good nurse, though. . . ."

We were looking at a dark photograph of the interior of the Kautochino church. Uncle Brage, with his eldest child, Eystein, on his knee, sat on one of the plain pine benches facing the church door. He looked purposeful. Beyond him rose the

little altar, spread with a white cloth heavy with Hardanger embroidery. There was room on the altar for only two candlesticks and a small three-armed candelabrum. The white candles stood askew. The picture of Christ that hung over the altar was lost in darkness. A tiny plain six-sectioned window shone whitely on the right. The hymns the congregation were to sing were indicated by large numerals on a small board that hung on one of the two pine supports which extended from floor to ceiling a few feet from the altar rail.

"The only white people in Kautochino, besides ourselves, were the sheriff and the storekeeper. It was odd and original, the singing we had from that congregation!"

"Did the people come to church?"

"The church was always full. Like some of the Lapps. They are very religious, those people. In fact, they got so fervent that at times there was trouble. There were bullet-holes in the walls of the storehouse on the church farm from a shooting that had taken place a few years before we came. They had got so excited. . . ."

A shooting among a pagan people aroused to violent religious fervor over a creed interpreted in their own terms it was a familiar story to my American ears.

"It is no wonder the Lapps are religious," Aunt

Lilla went on. "The glory of that country up there! All winter long we could hear the fierce crackling of those northern lights and see them over us, shooting, dancing, darting, like spirits. And the moon on the snow! And the stars! Nowhere in the world can one see so many stars. They were as thickly sown as grain at the spring planting. And then the long dark winters, and the unearthly splendor all around. Naturally the people are mystical and secretive."

"What do they live on?"

"Reindeer. For them the reindeer is food and clothing, and even shelter, for they use the hides to make their tents. The Lapps go where the reindeer go."

"What did Uncle Brage grow on his farm?"

Aunt Lilla laughed.

"Potatoes and turnips. And a little barley. And we had a cow."

"Did he drive reindeer?"

"Yes—"

Anna came in at that moment to say she needed something from the *kolonial,* or grocery. Aunt Lilla and I prepared to go for it. The main street was only a two- or three-minute walk from the Rectory.

"From Kautochino, we went to Orkedal. That's south of Trondheim, on the west coast. That was easier. It's my fault, I guess, that your uncle isn't a bishop. He was up for it once."

"How is that?"

"Oh, I have always spent so much time with the children when I suppose I should have been at teas and things . . ."

She laughed too.

"But it *is* a fault to be shy," she said. "Brage says so, too. Just last spring, there was a meeting of deacons' wives here in Lillehammer, and of course it was my place to give the welcoming address. But I couldn't. Never, never in the world could I have got up before a crowd of people and made a speech. I would have died."

Her eyes looked terror-stricken even now.

"I had a few in for tea and that was all I could do. Then I made the maid so nervous she tipped the tray. Besides, I cannot *stand* the inanities!"

My suspicion had been right—it was not only shyness that made Aunt Lilla aloof.

"One time up at Orkedal, when we first went there, we went to some kind of a social gathering where they were dancing folk dances. Everyone joined in, and they wanted me to take part too. But I refused. Then someone said, 'Just wait. When you've been here longer, you will.' "

"But you never did."

"No, I never did." Then she gave me a quick look. "But do you understand that?"

"Yes, I understand."

Aunt Lilla's face turned fiery red and she hurried into a shop. She did not look at me again all the time we were downtown.

The shops in the main street of Lillehammer are in small, two-storied frame buildings, opening directly on the walk. Bookshops, meat shops, bakeries, handcraft shops—they all show their wares as if that were all there was to it. No handbills, no one-cent sales, no screaming posters. There seems to be an impression current in Norway that the consumers know what the shops have to offer, what they want to buy, and how much they should pay. Housewives carry their purchases home themselves in little woven birch baskets. Staples are laid by in bulk at semi-annual intervals.

We bought what we needed and went home to a dinner of boiled sausage, boiled potato, *flatbrød,* and boiled rice with cooked *tyttebaer,* a red berry resembling the cranberry, for a sauce. The thin, dark *flatbrød* broke crisply in our fingers as we braced it against the table with our left hand and ate it, without butter, throughout the meal.

After dinner came the siesta. The house slept. The coffee, when we awoke, was wonderfully satisfying.

During my weeks at Lillehammer I returned day after day to the museum on the hill. History quietly

waited in those old interiors and I came to get the *feel* of the past much more readily and deeply than if I had but read it. Passing through the low doorways, sitting at the worn refectory tables, handling the little wooden ale bowls—they were smooth and seasoned and polished as satin through generations of use—or sitting on the edge of the hearth and imagining the red warmth of the birchwood fire on my arm, I came to know seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century Norway warmly and intimately.

On the way to the buildings of the old farm known as Bjornstad, which has been wholly reconstructed, stands the ancient wooden stave church that Uncle Brage had pointed out the first time I was there. Its sharp steeple is not much higher than the spruces and firs around it. The outer door opening into the sacristy they say is the original—hung in about 1021, when the sainted King Olaf ordered the church built, and presented a proprietor peasant, Torgeir, with a lake in return for building such a "temple" on his estate.

Though the stave churches of Norway represented the apex of architectural achievement in wood during the Middle Ages, this church from Gudsbrandal is both small and plain. It has little of the glorious carving which characterizes much of the architecture in wood. The plain columns on either side of the

doors are topped with simple flat carvings of supporting hands.

The entrance room outside the nave, where churchgoers left their weapons before entering, is a hundred years younger than the tiny original part. To the left, as one enters the nave, is the seat of the cottar, of *husmann,* and overhead, farther on, is the loge, nearly as high as the pulpit, of the lord of the estate. Broad and complacent, he no doubt enjoyed sitting there looking down, figuratively as well as literally, on his commoner brethren.

"On days when an offering was to be taken up he always had with him one of his cottars and a supply of small coins. When the offering started, he would give the cottar a coin and send him down the outside stairs into the church to lay it on the altar, after which the cottar would return for another coin and in its turn bring it down. Thus, the owner's man would be passing from his lord to the altar during the whole time the offering hymn was being sung and the collection was in progress. He would show them he was from Eidsvold!" *

The interior is bright with brass candle-holders, a brass candle-chandelier, and a brass baptismal bowl in an ancient soapstone font, with bands of carving. Beyond the pillared partition is a colorful

* From Ivar Kleiven's book, *I Gamle Dâgâ,* as presented by Anders Sandvig.

painted medley of Jesus and His disciples, Jesus with Mary, Jesus with John the Baptist, and, at last, Jesus ascending into heaven in the wake of heralding angels with trumpets and palms. At the very top is God, sitting on a gilded ball, his arms outspread. Despite the alarming realism, it is a striking work of art—the creation of a boy goatherd of the seventeenth century.

In the sacristy behind the altar, one day, a schoolteacher asked the guide who was directing them if this had been a Catholic church. The severity of her tone seemed to imply that everything he said would be used against him.

"Yes, St. Olaf was a Catholic," the guide said, smiling.

"Don't you have any *Lutheran* churches in the collection?" she asked. She was going to be loyal to her Minneapolis faith.

"This church became Lutheran after the Reformation," the guide said, still smiling.

She did not appear satisfied. There was a flounce in her walk as she passed out the ancient sacristy door and into the little churchyard.

Bjørnstad shows a typical arrangement of buildings around an inner and an outer *tun* from ancient days to nearly modern times. The plan, with two courtyards—one bordered with dwelling houses and storehouses, the other with the cow barn, the pig-

sty, and the sheep and goat sheds—enclosed with stockades and gates, had already taken form in the early days of the Vikings, nearly two thousand years ago.

Old farms of this type were the principal seats of Norwegian life and culture until comparatively recent times. The towns in Norway—excepting the coastal settlements—are very young as cultural centers. The national university was founded less than a hundred and fifty years ago. It was the old domains of ancient families that determined the character of the nation's culture. That these old dwelling houses should indicate vividly the character of that culture is only natural. The houses people live in, and a study of how they live in them, tell us much about the people themselves. Shelter and sustenance are primary in all economics, and objects identified with them enable us to recreate in a considerable degree the daily life of an individual, a group, or even, in a limited sense, a race.

Family ties were stout bonds among the old Norwegians. The family tree, along with the alphabet, was one of the first things a child was taught. The eldest son always, without question, had allodial right to the farm. The old people, upon his marriage, retired to the dwelling house across the *tun* from the main house. Younger sons and daughters took the other houses.

An allodial estate as large as Bjørnstad was a community in itself, a state within a state. The owner was sovereign. He ruled absolutely over his domain. Everyone in the family bent to his will. Might no doubt often gave way to right, for they had powerful wills, those old Norwegians.

On some farms like Bjørnstad as many as five or six married sons dwelt with their families. Altogether there might be thirty or forty persons. There was sound reason for all those storehouses holding bin upon bin of meal and for those enormous round wooden boxes for *flatbrød* that stood in rows on tables inside these pillared structures.

I stood on the *tun* one day and imagined how it had been when people lived there. I heard doors open and slam. I saw an old woman with a skein of yarn in her hand walk slowly from her house, the *karstue,* to the master house across the *tun.* . . . Three stalwart middle-aged men were down at the old water mill grinding grain. . . . Someone was hammering at iron in the blacksmith shop. . . . Someone else was mending harness, the long tarred thread screeching through his fingers. . . .

I visioned snow knee-deep on the *tun.* The *tun* tree outside the master house was crowned with it. and its branches hung low over the little house. The sod roofs were lost under a dome, soft as eiderdown, of snow, and the dinner bell from its belfry on the

log storehouse clanged without echo or resonance in the cold, clear air. . . .

The entrance to the eighteenth-century *Anderstue* that stands first on the right as one crosses the *tun* is through a little enclosed porch, not much wider than the door, with walls of wide planks decorated with a cut-out design. The floor inside is of plank and the corner fireplace is large and roomy. The long table stands in its traditional place along a wall and at its center, against the wall, is the seat of the head of the house. On the table, at regular intervals, stand wooden ale bowls. An enormous clock, its unpainted wooden case covered with carving, rises to the ceiling.

Steep stairs ascend from the porch to a veranda and two rooms once busy with weaving and spinning; in a third room the reserve household supplies were kept. There are two large looms and many spinning wheels with reels and bobbins. Heaps of yarn lie on the long table. A corner fireplace helped to make the floor less cold.

In the clothes room, along the walls, stand heavy oaken and leather-covered chests. Some are carved and painted, with initials and date inscribed in flowing letters on a shield. Others are decorated with bands of hammered steel and bright nailheads. The hinges and locks are massive and strong. From beams above hang scores of woven covers or rugs, and the

walls are covered with men's and women's garments. On the table in the middle of the room are stacks of ale bowls, rows of silver and pewter tankards, wooden dishes and spoons, plaited birch baskets and porridge ladles. Apparently one did not borrow ware from one's neighbors when one had a party in those days in Norway.

This had been a prosperous and well-known farm for centuries—owned by one of the best-known families in the region. Many a wedding and other great social function held there had been the talk of the neighborhood for years afterward.

Herr Sandvig tells a story, recounted here from Ivar Kleiven, of a wedding in 1777:

Pål Kristensen of Bjørnstad was third cousin to the bride and related to the bridegroom, too.

It often happened, in those days, that when many people gathered in the neighborhood, some misunderstandings would come up. For there was not much time between the drinks of whiskey from the little glasses. Inevitably a discussion arose as to who was the strongest in the company. Pål Kristensen Bjørnstad had the reputation of being strongest, but on this occasion doubts of his prowess were murmured, and soon he became the mark of many appraising eyes.

Nothing happened until after the stump dance.

The stump dance took place the second or third day of the wedding celebration. The bride and groom danced around the stump first, then they stepped up on

it and were handed glasses of brandy. They stood there until the next couple had danced around them. Then they gave up their place to the new couple, who were served with brandy in turn, and in turn gave place to the couple that followed. If the parents of the bride and groom were young and spry enough to take part, it was they who followed the bridal couple onto the stump, and it was a great honor to be able to dance the stump after them. The master of ceremonies determined who should dance with whom, and to heighten the fun, he paired off the most incongruous partners, though he took kindly account of any young people who were casting sheep's eyes at each other. If the master of ceremonies were clever and a man of insight and information, he could make the stump dance an event to be dreaded. The last couple up was the cook and the cellarman, the cook with a whip and the cellarman with a beer mug. The stump was as big and heavy a stump as could be found in those days, when big trees were not lacking.

The stump at the wedding had been made heavier by being hollowed out and filled with sand, and that anyone should be able to lift it seemed impossible. It offered a chance for the doubters to taunt Pål about his reputation for strength and they took advantage of it. A sharp young man from Dovre asked who could carry out the stump, and another answered:

"Big Pål here ought to be able to do that, but I guess he's too spindly in the legs after all."

Everyone laughed.

Pål turned blazing red and before anyone knew what was happening, he walked over to the stump,

tipped it over, picked it up, and started towards the door with it.

Every soul in the house followed. No one had dreamed it could be carried. When Pål got outside he indicated a spot across the *tun,* and people realized he meant to carry it there. The master of ceremonies was a schoolteacher from Vågå who loved to sing. He fell in behind Pål, struck up a tune, and followed Pål across the *tun.* He sang so that the hills and valleys rang.

Pål turned his head and said: "Ask them from me, will you, Iva, if they think my spindly legs will hold."

At that moment he reached the spot he had indicated and dropped the stump.

"Psst," he said.

The word became a proverb: "Psst," said the man from Bjørnstad, as he dropped the stump."

But Pål was still not satisfied. When he returned to the house he stepped up on the long plank bench beside the table and with one kick broke it in two. He said:

"If anyone wants to test my spindly legs, why, he can just step up."

The room was so still one could have heard a pin drop.

The next house to which the girl guides, in their full plaid woolen skirts and red vests, conduct visitors is the newest of the group, built in the year of the American Constitutional Convention. It lies on the far side of the *tun.* The silvery gray boards of its weathered porch shine out against the brown of the log wall where it shows through the window and

door openings, which are surrounded with small twin arches. The arches of the door in turn are surrounded with a plank carved with a cut-out pattern. The house door is wide and is hung on handsome iron hinges, and its sill, presumably to arrest cold drafts, rises a foot or more above the floor. Entering the big main room one is delighted with the white-scoured floor spread with juniper needles, the light ceiling laid in a herringbone pattern, the triangular corner fireplace hung with utensils of bright copper and heavy black iron. Close by the doorway on the floor stands a covered barrel-shaped copper container for a mixture of sour milk and water which quenched the thirst on a summer's day much better than plain water.

By the windows runs the long table, flanked with benches as long as itself and centered with an ale bowl. In the corner are short beds. Either people in Norway were of shorter stature than they are now, or they half-sat when they slept, for some of these beds are no more than four and a half feet long. (Beds in present-day Norway are also short, so it must be a habit to sit and sleep. There are always the hard bolster and a pile of pillows to prevent one from stretching out.) Between the fireplace and the bed stands a closed cupboard, its elaborately carved doors painted in many colors and in gilt. Against the opposite wall is another cupboard, this one dec-

orated with the famous "rose painting." The motifs of the pictorial scenes are Biblical, rich in Renaissance culture.

Between the windows stands the traditional tall clock. By the door to the *klev,* that half-room that leads off every living room for the "old people to draw themselves back into," hangs the little cupboard for the brush and comb and the rack of towels with its finely hand-woven, embroidered towel which was not for use but which hung like a curtain over the heavier service towels beneath. Everything has a function; there is nothing superficial; and everything useful has been made beautiful.

It is not surprising that Norway leads in modern functional art. The people have always avoided superfluities, worked to improve what they had, and kept in mind the prime importance of *use.* The climate and position of the country produced conditions, geographic and economic, that forced the people to depend on their own resources. Their houses show how well they have utilized the materials at hand, just as the meticulousness and attractive way in which they prepare and serve their food show how well they have learned to compensate for lack of variety in substance with a plentiful variety in form.

In one particular, however, they left things in the air. The *hemmelighet* or "privy place" is a small

platform projecting from the second-floor veranda. It must have been cold and uncomfortable to be exposed there on a winter day. And that spot beside the house must have offended the eye and nose, however carefully one guided his feet. Still, one remembers the Greeks used the streets for the same purpose.

Opening from the second-floor veranda are two doors, one leading to the clothes room where, as in the house across the *tun,* is a rich supply of covers, rugs and garments. One of the tapestries is an elegant one, picturing the meeting of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The laces and embroidery on their intricate garments are worked out in the finest detail. It was made near Heidal in the nineteenth century.

The other room is a guest room, also elegantly furnished, with two enormous cupboards, one of which held the family silver.

A group of us stood admiring this silver one day. I was the only foreigner. One of the group, a lady, had heard there was a silver tankard here that had once been in her family, and she was eager to see it. The largest part of the collection had come from a farm in Vågå of the Gudbrandsdal, but other pieces, from time to time, had been picked up on other farms.

We examined the handsome three-legged tureens,

the covered bowls—the lower part for cream, the lid for sugar—the coffeepots with eighteenth-century dates, the drinking cups, the tankards and flagons, the punch ladles, the teaspoons, the buttons, the buckles, the silver bridal belt, the lockets and medallions and chains.

The visitor found her tankard. The name of the family is always engraved on these vessels, in graceful flowing characters, around a coin inlaid in the lid. She held it proudly in her hand.

She nudged her companion and laughed when a farmer who was one of the visiting group spoke admiringly of the tankard in the broad Vågå dialect of *landsmål*—the very one that the family who had owned the tankard had used! The story of Norway's cultural self-realization apparently is still not known to all the Norwegians themselves!

The farmer, in unpressed clothes and shaggy beard, continued to stand absorbed in the gleaming beauty of the silver, unconscious of having furnished comic relief for the lady, or of having held the mirror up to human nature—in a limited class sense—for me. I noted that on his lapel he wore an imprinted white ribbon indicating he had been a delegate to the convention of the Farmers' Party held in Oslo that week. The Farmer-Labor bloc is the strongest political group in Norway and his neighbors had trusted him to represent their interests—though the

lady did not know it—at their annual meeting. Her light laugh at his accent, which was that of her own family, told me how tenuous, how wisp-like, was the bond of her identification with the land and its people. Yet that very accent of the country man, his frank uncalculated admiration, and the badge—mark of his neighbors' trust—made him one with the country, and gave him a weight that, for me, embedded him too deep for the reach of ridicule.

Loitnantstue, the fourth house in the row, is the guest house among the dwellings on the community farm. Its door is nearly square, it is so broad. The porch columns are simply carved. Inside are the usual colorful cupboards and chests and to the right of the door is a bed whose sides and canopy frame are completely covered with carving. Around the top are the words: "FOOD HE HAS HAD AND ALE HE SHALL GET WHEN HE HAS HAD HIS REST. O.P.F.B.C.D.G." (Whatever did those letters mean?) "WELCOME GUEST RESTS BEST WHEN DEEP IN BED HE CAN LIE."

The only building besides the dwelling houses that faces the first *tun* is the *ildhus,* a scullery and laundry combined; and it stands somewhat apart from the row of dwellings though easy of access to all. It was indispensable on the farm. The one in Bjørnstad is a sturdy two-story building, and the main room is full of kettles, pots and pans, and huge

wooden *traug,* or dough-bowls. There is a large gray-stone fireplace in one corner and beside it a pile of dust-dry wood. There are also a long table and benches, like those of the dwelling houses, for sometimes meals are eaten there, in the busiest time of the year. The floor is the hard-stamped earth.

On a farm like Bjørnstad there was always enough to do. . . . The *ildhus* was usually the women's workshop, and when they met there, you may be sure there arose a humming and a babbling—and much whispering. All that had happened, or was going to happen, or was suspected to be in the wind, either on the farm or in the neighborhood, was first of all talked over here. First one of the maids might arrive with a bit of news; next it might be the cottar's wife who had this or that to tell. But the one who had most of all to talk about was the bakerwoman. She went from farm to farm and often stayed as long as six or seven weeks in one place at a time in the fall or spring, to bake up a stack of *flatbrød.* Then it was that quiet departed from the *ildhus!* The bakerwoman's mouth worked in synchrony with her rolling pin and with her hands that worked the hard mound of dough into thin sheets with lightning-like rapidity. And, while she talked, many a sheet burned to blackness on the iron at her side. If the mistress of the farm unexpectedly appeared at such a moment, it might be that she would let a little word fall. "Burnt bread," she might say, "is good only for witches to lay over the cup of water, when the melted lead is dropped in to see if the sick child has died."

But though there was much talking at baking time, there was not much less at slaughtering time, and at the candlemaking time that followed, and on days before the several holidays. But then there were several different kinds of work going on at the same time, with people coming and going, and one never felt as secure as when there were but two or three at work.*

The products of baking and slaughtering were carried to one of the four storehouses. The one by the big south gate fascinated me most. It is of log, and here the customary porch is not enclosed but stands open and the second story seems to overhang the first. Here is the farm bell that called the men and women in from the fields. Beyond the massive door the walls are lined with heavy bins. The shelves that hold the butter and cheese molds are scoured as white as they were a hundred years ago. The bins are empty now, but in its heyday Bjørnstad was known as one of the best grain-producing farms in the section. (In those days, irrigation troughs—channeled birch logs—extended on ten-foot supports over the whole farm. Gudbrandsdal farmers said, "Just give us sun, O Lord, and we'll supply the water ourselves.")

On the second floor is the meat supply, hanging on pegs and hooks around the wall. Hams and shoulders by the dozens, quarters of beef and, yes, even a

* Ivar Kleiven, *I Gamle Dågå.*

shank of bear, all dried hard as stone, besides rolls and rolls of sausage. In the middle of the room stands a long table stacked with rows of *flatbrød.*

It was the custom in Gudbrandsdal to leave the drying meat untouched, uncured, until the cuckoos crowed in the spring. The hams were let hang at least two years.

There were four meals a day on farms like this. Coffee and bread at six, barley-meal porridge and milk at ten, dinner at three of pea soup with salt meat, groats with butter, dried sausage and *flatbrød,* or a wheat-flour gruel with *flatbrød.* Coffee no doubt came an hour or two later, then as now. At eight in the evening there was barley-meal porridge with milk again.

After a score or more visits to Bjørnstad, I came to feel at home there. I came to understand Norway's peasant culture. I felt what it was to be close to the soil.

The waiter at the modern Maihaugen restaurant halfway down the hill had a green bottle of cool Pils waiting for me on a table by a window every day at one o'clock, as I went by on my way back to the Rectory after several hours' sojourn in old Noreg. Pils would loose my tongue and ease the burden of oral Norwegian at the dinner table at two-thirty.

In the evening, after supper, we would always

gather around the radio and the reading table in the rectory dining room. My uncle would smoke a long-stemmed pipe as he read the newspapers on the table before him, the black cord from his glasses mingling with the cord attached to the long pipe. Occasionally he would glance up and peer at one of us over his glasses, often to extricate me from some sentence in Norwegian in which I had lost myself. Uncle Brage always seemed to know what I wanted to say, and, after I had struggled long enough trying to say it myself, he would put in a word or two that would free me at once.

Sometimes it would be Solveig's song from *Peer Gynt* that floated in to us from the radio. At others it would be a number by one of the numerous male choruses in Norway. Sometimes it would be a play by the Norwegian engineer-playwright, Brockmann. Brockmann was a Marxist, my uncle would say with an impatient shift of his paper. Aunt Lilla and their youngest son would be listening intently.

"Hate! Love! Isn't it all the same thing?" came a line one evening.

Uncle Brage showed real distress.

"I don't see how you can sit there and listen to that stuff!" he said, turning around to Aunt Lilla and their son. "I should think it would make you sick!"

But no one turned the radio off and no one

stopped listening. Indeed, one cannot turn to another station on the radio in Norway—unless one tries to get London or Berlin or Paris, or, after midnight, New York. For there is only one station in Norway. Radio, in Norway, is operated by the State. No salvos of sales-talk such as carefully insults the intelligence of listeners in the States ever comes over the air in Norway. One pays twenty *kroner* a year for the privilege of having a radio, and sales-talks form no part of the program. Sometimes five or ten minutes elapse between the close of Beethoven's *Fifth,* say, and the news report for the evening. A refreshing pause!

I asked the usual question:

"Aren't you afraid the radio will be used by the Government for political propaganda?"

My cousin looked up from the *Landsmål,* or New Norwegian, grammar he was studying in preparation for an examination at his high school next day.

"We *elect* the Government, don't we?" he said.

At ten o'clock Aunt Lilla would go to the pantry and, extricating a key from somewhere in the depths of her garments, unlock the corner cupboard and bring forth plates and fruit knives and an orange for each of us. It was bedtime, she said, and doctors nowadays were recommending that one eat an orange before retiring. But they were terribly expensive, she added.

Outside there would be just a thin veil that barely dimmed the daylight. It was not yet midsummer.

One evening as we sat there I was examining more closely the faces on the wall around me. Uncle Brage, in turn, was eying me.

"Har du greia på slegta?" he asked. ("Do you know the family tree?")

"No."

He looked forgiving. After all, I was only an American. He looked at Aunt Lilla, and she nodded and turned off the radio. Uncle Brage pulled his chair over to the table and adjusted his glasses on his nose. I knew, without his saying, that he was waiting for pen and paper. I went to get a notebook.

"Arne Horgheim, 1527; (Space) Erik, b. 1633; Jakob, b. 1679; Ivar, b. 1715; Jakob, b. 1740; Olav, b. 26 Jan., 1776; Jakob, b. 16 Feb., 1804; Olav, b. 5 Sept., 1830; Inga, b. 3 July, 1863."

He wrote rapidly, without pause. He started another column, explaining a line he drew:

"The first Jakob's father was Erik Horgheim. His mother's name is unknown."

"Father: Jakob Horgheim; Mother: Synnove; Father: Ivar Opland; Mother: Marthe; Father: Jakob Opland; Mother: Ingeborg; Father: Olav Høyem; Mother: Randi; Father: Jakob Høyem; Mother: Karen; Father: Olav Høyem; Mother: Olina."

One page was full. He turned to another and resumed. Aunt Lilla sat quietly with her hands in her lap, as at a lecture.

"Inga, b. 3 July, 1863; Olina, b. 1 October, 1839; Ingebreght, b. 1780; Haldor, b. 1759; Anders, b. 1714." Here he drew a heavy line. (What did that signify, I wondered.) "Father: Olav; Mother: Olina; Father: Ingebreght Mule; Mother: Marit; Father: Haldor Mule; Mother: Brit; Father: Anders Berg; Mother: Eli; Father: Jorund.

"Your name is spelled with a *d* in the masculine," he remarked. Then he drew another heavy line and began again.

I was lost. My mother's father's father's mother was—where? who? I would have to study it after class.

"Inga, b. 3 July, 1863; Olina, b. 1 October, 1839——"

"Your grandparents, too, were cousins," he said.

Another heavy line. Is *that* what the lines meant?

"Marit, b. 1796; Karen, b. 1769."

Then opposite:

"Father: Olav Høyem; Mother: Olina; Father: Ingebreght; Mother: Marit; Father: Olav Høiem; Mother: Karen Schjetlein; Father: Ivar Schjetlein; Mother: Marit Schjetlein."

Another page:

"Inga's children: Ronald, b. 1889; Ingrid, b.

1891; Olga Marie, b. 1899; Eystein Olaf, 1900; Jorunn Jakobine, 1904." (There we were.)

"Jakob's children": (This was the Uncle Jakob whose team of black horses my father had driven into a raging river.) "Olaf, 1899; Astri, 1899; Svanhild, 1906; Sverre, 1908.

"Kristmar's children: Margit, b. 1889; Odd Wilhelm, 1891." (I remembered a photographer's shop in an ugly Montana mining town.) "Brage Benjamin, b. 1893." (I saw a wall of switches in an A.C.M. smelting plant.)

"Your grandfather composed that name *Kristmar,*" he remarked before he went on.

"Signy's children: None." He wrote *None* heavily. (I saw a little girl playing in an Oslo park. "Do you think she is pretty?")

"Brage's children: Olav Eystein." (Born the same year as my brother Eystein, named for the same bishop.) "Gunvor, 1902; Gustav, 1905; Inger, 1908; Ynghild, 1913; Erling, 1916.

"Borghild's children: Johann, 1906; Gunvor, 1908." (They had changed their names to *John* and *Gertrude* to fit the "American scene.")

"Hallfred's children: Olav, 1910; Inger, 1913; Torbjørn, 1916."

At last, he flipped the notebook shut, though I felt another generation at my elbow, waiting to be entered. My own little girl, who is all American, half

Norwegian, part French Canadian and part American Indian.

"A younger man will have to learn the rest," he said.

"And what class are we?" I asked him.

Aunt Lilla laughed. Uncle Brage was quiet a moment before answering.

"I don't know what you mean," he said finally.

"I don't know what *class* we are," I said.

He began to smile at me.

"We are peasants," he said.

"Where do we come from?" (Had some of these before me danced the stump dance in the Gudbrandsdal, I wondered, in a brown log house with an elegantly carved door, and climbed a steep stairway to a clothes room filled with intricate fine tapestries?)

"We came from Byneset in Trondelagen. Haven't you read your grandfather's book?"

"I didn't know he wrote a book."

Uncle Brage looked astonished. Aunt Lilla was chuckling more and more.

"He wrote a good many! The one I mean now is the one about Byneset, where he and your grandfather and their parents and their parents, back to 1776, were born. Didn't your mother talk to you about your grandfather?"

"Not that I remember. We didn't care to be Nor-

wegians. Norwegians wore homemade clothes and were towheads."

Uncle Brage and Aunt Lilla looked serious. They were beginning to understand.

"He should not have worked in a bank, your grandfather shouldn't. [He was Controller of Currency in the Bank of Norway.] It was not suitable work for a man of his gifts. It was a doctor who persuaded him he ought to stop studying when he did. And it was the prospect of higher pay that drew him to telegraphy. But Father should have gone on studying, that's what he was fitted for. He should have been a famous preacher or teacher.

"But at least he had time to write while he was working in a humdrum office. He wrote after hours, or even during hours, when there was nothing to do. He wasn't the kind to sit idle.

"As early as 1855 he had published a book—a textbook. And in 1862 he wrote *Nes eller Bynes, The Story of a Community.*"

"What was the textbook on?" I asked.

"*Landsmål,*" he replied, a little curtly. He got up and went to his study, motioning for me to follow. Uncle Brage's study was lined from floor to ceiling with books. A huge desk and a high-backed, red-leathered chair stood in the middle. In one corner was a round black heater.

"This was Ole Vig's desk," he said in passing. "He and your grandfather were close friends."

He handed me a thin, finely printed book with a black cover and gilt letters. It was brown on the lower edge from many years on a shelf.

"Take it and read it. But of course I want it for my own children."

Aunt Lilla was still at the table when we returned. It was no darker outside than it had been hours before.

"My wife here," Uncle Brage said—and he pinched her breast as he went by—"stems from St. Olaf himself."

Aunt Lilla gave his hand an angry shove, but recovered herself quickly.

"The royal blood is greatly diluted, I assure you," she told me.

"It's the same tree even if it is a thousand years old," Uncle Brage said.

"When you get to Trondheim," he began again, "you will want to go out to Ilen and see where your mother lived when she was a child. The house is still there of course. Now the street is named for your grandfather. And the trees he planted are big now. . . .

"Father was always planting something." Uncle Brage's voice was reminiscent. "When he came home

in the evenings, the first thing he did was get into some old clothes and go out in the garden to work. Or he would get busy with something on the house —painting or carpentering or plastering or something. He was handy that way. And he was never in better humor than when he was busy with some such work. Oh, yes, he could be hasty when things went wrong. Then his eyes would blaze, I can tell you! But he would soon get over it.

"We used to go hiking together a great deal, Father and we. Father was one of the first men in Trondheim who went hiking in the way we go hiking now. Every chance he got, after office hours in the summer and on Sunday, he would take some of us tramping in the country. It was a big moment when, after hours of walking, we would throw ourselves down beside some little stream, and set a coffeepot over a little fire to cook.

"And how he sang. He sang in the house at home, he sang in the streets. Or coming up from the fjord after a swim. People would turn and stare at him as if he were a madman, walking through the streets, drying his hair with a towel, and singing! Mother and the rest of us would feel embarrassed, but Father did not care what people thought. In fact, I think he only sang the louder when he saw people disapproving.

"And of course the pietists did disapprove. Any-

one who loved life as Father did was bound to stir up 'respectable' people. . . .

"He was a fighter. He had a battle going on several fronts nearly all the time. He always had a thousand things that had to be done. And *at once!*

"He hated the pietists. Their views were too narrow for Father. He was too real a person to live in their cramped world. He did not think they were kind either, those narrow-minded ones.

"But though he couldn't get along with the majority of the churchgoers, he did not deny Christianity, as people said he did. On Sunday mornings, he would gather us all around him and read to us from the Scriptures. And sometimes he took us all to church and to Communion. How happy he was then!

" 'When the preacher says: "The forgiveness of all your grievous sins," then the heart in me sings,' he said. 'Not only when he says it to me, but each time he says it all around the altar, "The forgiveness of all your grievous sins—the forgiveness of all your grievous sins." '

"None of us will ever forget how it was around the table at home on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. And I remember how I heard him praying on sleepless nights—or singing Sunday mornings before he was up, even. We often were awakened by his singing. . . .

"And beside him, Mother . . ."

I looked at my grandmother's face on the wall before me. Was it calm or stolid?

"Mother was nine years younger than Father and she had not been out among people much when she married and moved to town. 'I cried a great deal at first,' she told me once. 'I read Hanna Winsnes and cried.' "

"Hanna Winsnes' Cookbook," Aunt Lilla explained.

"There were seven of us, and she never had more than one maid, but I never heard her complain. She was a hard worker too, as hard a worker as Father. They had inherited it.

"Mother was always the first one up and the last one to bed. The morning meal had to be ready at seven and at night there was always some mending to be done. But there was one time of day when she sat quiet. That was at dusk—*skumskotet,* we called it. The light from the fire in the kitchen stove would be shining through the damper and across the floor and all of us would crowd around her, sitting or lying on the floor, while she sat in 'her' chair near the stove.

" 'Tell us a story, Mother,' we would say.

"And she would tell us about the time when we were little, and about a little dog she had, named Marthe, that the wolves overtook one winter eve-

ning just above the farm; they found a patch of bloody snow there next morning. And about the black horse that her father had been so fond of but that he had lost to the horsetraders just the same, though he had named a price so high that he had thought surely they would refuse and he be rid of them. She told about Christmas Eves at home—of the preparations over all the house—the scrubbing, the scouring, the baking—she told us about the cows and calves, the sheep and lambs and the goats there on her old home on Byneset.

"And the fairy stories! Often she told us stories out of books she had read, mostly Bjørnson and his folk tales. About Oivind and Torbjørn and Arne, and about Synnove and Eli and others. They were just as new every time.

"But it was hard to get her to sing. She said she couldn't sing. But when she did, it was the sweetest thing we knew, to go to sleep with Mother singing, 'Sleep well, little one.'

"They didn't always agree on how to bring us up, Father and Mother. She always put the best possible construction on every thing we did, but Father saw through us. But he was too hard on us sometimes, hasty as he was, and then she would step between and beseech him. . . .

"She sympathized with Father's work, but she thought he interfered sometimes in things that did

not concern him. He couldn't help but try to change things around him into something he argued was better—and usually was. He would fight for his ideas and in the battle he never gave nor asked quarter. Then was when Mother suffered. It all seemed so useless and unnecessary to her. 'Why not be pleasant?' she would say.

"She often went with him to meetings and lectures. That way she met many of the celebrities of those days. Once she had heard Ole Bull play and she never forgot it. 'On the Sun I Gaze,' was 'Mother's song,' we said."

Uncle Brage's mild goodness must have been Grandmother's, I thought, as he finished.

Now it was after midnight and we were all cold. The white hall upstairs was as light as day as I passed through to my room. The birds outside my window were singing.

The next morning as we were sitting at the breakfast table, the maid brought me a letter from Aunt Signy. Her writing was fine and light on the big square envelope. We read it together.

"Signy writes Danish, out and out," Uncle Brage said impatiently. "You wouldn't think she was Father's daughter."

I thought of how Aunt Signy had suffered for her radicalism in another way.

"But she has the same kind of spirit as Grandfather had, hasn't she, Uncle Brage? At least she was strong enough not to care what people thought and said about her."

Uncle Brage did not answer. His white hand lifted the tiny Norwegian coffee cup to his lips and set it down again with an infinitesimal bang.

When the day's Scripture, which Uncle Brage always read after breakfast, was ended, my cousin Erling, who wanted to study aviation but who dreaded telling his parents because he knew it would hurt them, turned on the radio. The weather forecast for the land was coming monotonously through the air like the rain it predicted. Then followed a news report: the Loyalists were gaining again in Spain, though Franco's men were mobilizing for another attack. . . .

Uncle Brage's own words of the night before, in another, not so different, connection came back to me.

"Anyone who loves life as Father did, is bound to stir up the ire of 'respectable' people. . . ."

The working people of Spain, loving life so much, were gaining on the pietists of *their* day. Economic pietists.

"They'll keep on until they kill each other off, that's how it'll turn out." He did not look at me.

"That will spare Uncle Brage the necessity of

thinking about the matter and perhaps have the comfortable status quo of his ideas disturbed," I thought.

The time had come for me to begin thinking of going on to Trondheim, to Uncle Hallfred's there. Aunt Lilla's and Uncle Brage's hospitality had been exquisitely extended now for three full weeks, but I knew that Aunt Lilla's sister, the one who had lived so long in Italy, was coming soon. And Uncle Brage's vacation was beginning too. He and Aunt Lilla always spent his vacation at their cottage in the mountains. They were debating whether to attend a convention of ministers on the way, or not. Aunt Lilla preferred not. Uncle Brage looked so tired, she thought. . . .

I did not want to leave. The Rectory, the lake, the ancient farms on the hill, the rushing river that crossed the town, the bucolic serenity of the life there, with its walls of books and pictures, the quiet afternoon siesta, the long evenings when Uncle Brage sat smoking his long-stemmed pipe, reading the paper . . .

I felt I belonged—in a way.

And—sweet thought—they felt I did, too—in a way.

"You look like the old *klokkar* on Bynes—your great-grandfather," Uncle Brage had said one eve-

ning after he had been eying me unusually long over his glasses. He indicated a large oval photograph of the old parish clerk high on the wall over the silver- and copper-laden dresser in the dining room. I saw a grim face that reminded me of the Salem witch hangers. Yet I felt flattered. I knew I had been accepted at last.

But I had not yet heard Uncle Brage preach. For on the Sunday before, he had packed his little black valise and gone to a parish across the lake to speak at a young people's convention. Only Aunt Lilla and I had gone to church. For me it had been the first time in twenty years!

We took a seat on one of the long benches at the rear. I thought, at first, that Aunt Lilla had selected that seat in order to spare me, for I had whisperingly confessed to her as we entered that I was unused to church.

"No, I always sit in the rear," she told me afterward. "Once, when I had to sit up in front, I fainted. Poor Brage! He had to come running down from the pulpit just as he was about to begin his sermon."

Aunt Lilla laughed embarrassedly at the recollection.

"It was the first service in a new parish, too. A big welcome had been arranged for us. That was what frightened me. They had set aside a special seat for me and—well, I couldn't stand it."

After church Aunt Lilla and I went for a long walk along a spruce-shaded path beside the stream, stopping now and then to pick the blue and white violets that peeped up through the brown evergreen-needled ground.

We ate our dinner of boiled sausage, mashed potato and hot dried apricot soup alone, that day, and after the siesta we let the maid go and cooked our coffee ourselves. Aunt Lilla talked to me about modern Norwegian literature.

"Our young writers are leaning too heavily on Freud and Marx," she said. "But I suppose that will right itself in time."

This Sunday I was going to hear Uncle Brage preach. He was pleased that I did not want to leave without hearing him. After all, my mother had been his big sister, whom he had wanted to be proud of him someday. . . .

Uncle Brage took only coffee for breakfast, and one slice of bread. He never ate before conducting High Mass, he said.

High Mass? Oh yes, church services in Norway are different from Lutheran services in America.

Aunt Lilla was not going. She would get the services over the radio, she said. The text for a given Sunday is the same in every Lutheran church in Norway, even in the "church of the air."

I took a seat halfway down the aisle, behind a

row of half-grown girls that ended, finally, at a thin, toil-worn couple who were their parents. The organ breathed low deep tones. A tall man carrying a silver-headed cane came in with his wife. All around me were women in black, holding black umbrellas. The bell above us sounded.

The sexton lighted the tall candles and took his seat against the wall at right angles to the altar.

The door from the vestry opened . . .

"He should have been a bishop!" . . . He had the episcopal air: solid, steady, authoritative. He moved slowly and with great dignity in his flowing white surplice and crimson scarf. His white hair looked whiter than before. He was followed by the assisting pastor.

My peasant soul glowed with pride. The archdeacon, the man of God, was *my* uncle. I came from a line of people who had felt that the pulpit was the highest place to which one could hope to climb. A preacher, or a *prost* or archdeacon, or a bishop stood at the very apex in achievement and culture.

Besides these prideful associations, I felt moved by his sweet goodness. His eyes did not avoid mine now as they had when I, in silence, had defended the Spanish Loyalists. He was true to himself within the limits of his age, and he was kind. One had no right to ask more of any man.

His eyes sought me out in the congregation, and,

as his arms fell in the sign of the cross, they drew the sign across my heart. Whatever he had, whatever culture his world had provided him with, whatever beauty his spirit had wrested from *his* world, I felt him trying to give to me at that moment. I sat humbly.

His old voice broke and failed once to ascend in the long chant that followed. A lilac veil lay gently upon the altar from the stained-glass window to his side.

His sermon followed the old pattern:

"Do not let our social well-being deceive you," he said. "Here in this country we have achieved greater economic security than has been the good fortune of most countries to achieve. But do not let it deceive you. It is nothing without God. Nothing. For remember—you must die. *Remember you must die.*"

His hand, so like Mother's, moved with his words.

As he talked, I saw the ranch house at home. I could see Mother filling a small black fire shovel with glowing coals from the kitchen range and carrying it upstairs. She was on her way to start a fire in the heater in my room. Her tired feet carried her heavy body slowly up the narrow stair.

When she knew the chill had gone off the room, she would call me. She would sit on the edge of my bed and clasp her hands over mine.

"Our Father,"—it was Uncle Brage's voice I heard, but it was Mother and my childish faith I felt—"Who art in Heaven." (I was in my bed at home, Mother sat beside me. Steadily across the wall moved a rectangle of light from a lantern carried by someone passing in the yard.) "Hallowed be Thy name." (Was it my brother Eystein coming up from the barn?) "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." (The lantern's light was traveling; soon it would shine on the bureau.) "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Now it was over my head.) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (There. It was gone. I heard the creak of snow beneath my window.) "For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, forever and ever. Amen."

Mother would continue. "Dear, kind God, care for us all tonight now, so that we may awaken bright and rested tomorrow morning. Amen." (How soft the hollow of her cheek was to my lips!)

Then she would go downstairs and I would hear her close the door between the stairway and the kitchen. The firelight from the open damper in the wood heater beside my bed would fall across the floor. . . .

I was standing in line waiting to receive Communion. My face was wet. . . .

I knelt.

Uncle Brage stood within the altar railing, the chalice in his hands. The assisting pastor held the silver tray.

"The forgiveness of all your grievous sins." Communion was beginning.

"The forgiveness of all your grievous sins." The lilac light, the crimson surplice. . . . My throat ached.

"The forgiveness of all your grievous sins."

"The forgiveness of . . ."

Soon it would be my turn. I turned up the little cup that stood before me—the end lined with gold.

". . . all your grievous sins."

"The forgiveness of all your grievous sins."

Now. I heard his breath come faster.

"The forgiveness of all your grievous sins."

He was past. It was over.

"The forgiveness . . ."

Outside, I ran blindly down a lilac-bordered street. I reached the lake and crossed the long bridge. I turned at the first turning. There, at the end of a street in the little village that lay at the bridge's end, I sat down on the pier that crooked out on the water.

Waves of self-abnegation rushed through me, in contrast to the quiet lapping of water at my feet.

I was going north to Trondheim on Tuesday.

For some time, I knew, Uncle Brage and Aunt Lilla had been worrying about how I would be received there. Hallfred was such a busy man, and Asbjørg—well, Asbjørg too was always so busy.

Not that they did not have a big enough house for guests.

"They have a whole villa!" Aunt Lilla said. I knew from her manner I was supposed to be impressed. Rognli, it was called. Lea of rowans.

And such parties as they gave at Rognli! They had one large room that they used only for parties. The *fest sal,* they called it. And the cut glass—the silver—the English porcelain!

"I have written Hallfred suggesting that he let you have one of his cottages on Byneset," Uncle Brage said. "He has two, you know."

I didn't know, but I could see plainly that the fact was not less than remarkable.

"Yes. One summer, when some of Asbjørg's relatives from Nordland were down, there was not room for them all in Hallfred Cottage—so he built another one! In just a few weeks!"

Uncle Brage smiled at the recollection as though it still seemed too fantastic to be true.

"Hallfred is like Father in some respects," he said. "Gets things done in a minute, though nervous and

high-strung. Of course none of us has nerves worth bragging about."

"Is Uncle Hallfred a radical too, and a fighter, like Grandfather?"

"Hallfred is a business man," Uncle Brage said.

Uncle Hallfred had been in America when he was a young man. I had a faint recollection of a handsome man with dimples who one day took our pictures in the garden, beneath the big transparent apple tree, with a device that enabled him to be in the picture too. I remembered how we marveled at the oddity of that. And I remembered that we had *kjot-kaker* that day for dinner. We always had *kjot-kaker* or meatballs, instead of salt pork, when any of Mother's family came to see us, or when the preacher came.

One day a letter of invitation arrived from Rognli. Uncle Brage and Aunt Lilla were plainly relieved. They wouldn't be "too busy," then. . . .

The letter had come addressed to *Sogneprest* in place of *Prost*. Uncle Brage laughed a little.

"Hallfred knows I'm *Prost,* yet he addresses me as *Sogneprest.*"

Suddenly I saw these two—the wealthy business man and the archdeacon—as still two peasant brothers, rivals in an acutely stratified social world.

"Perhaps Hallfred, being the youngest, wants to be the 'biggest,' " I suggested.

"I think you understand," Uncle Brage said, folding his napkin in a way I knew meant that the subject should be dropped.

Tuesday came. I sat down for the last time at the pleasant table in the Rectory's sunny dining room. The train left before two, and Aunt Lilla had prepared a light meal of fried fishballs—the delectable finely ground cod—and, luxury of luxuries, sliced fresh tomatoes. She urged me to eat.

"Remember you are going over Dovre this afternoon," she said.

Over Dovre. Oh, yes, *Dovregubben,* the powerful locomotive of the State railway, was going to take me over Dovre. I was to see Snøhytta, the highest mountain in Norway. I was to pass through Vågå, the seat of the farms from which had come the buildings I knew so well on Maihaugen. I was to traverse the Gudbrandsdal, the granary of the nation. I was going to Trondheim—the "king city." I was to visit Byneset, my ancient family home. . . .

Suddenly, just before the taxi came, Aunt Lilla announced she had to go on an errand downtown. In a few minutes she was back.

"A little remembrance from Lillehammer," she said.

It was a silver pin. A pin to remember them by! And there are not many *kroner* to spare in a Norwegian archdeacon's house!

The taxi came. "Good-by." "Good-by." (Why, Aunt Lilla was crying! And Uncle Brage! He gave my shoulder a pat.) "Good-by." "Good-by."

They stood in the lilac-hung gateway and waved until the taxi turned out of sight.

I had a long wait for *Dovregubben.* My cousin, the one who wanted to be an aviator, but who dreaded to hurt his parents by telling them so, was at the station to help me with my bags. To pass the time, we entered the restaurant in the Bondeheimmet Hotel and ordered coffee. *Bondeheimmet* means "peasant home," and there are hotels of that name over all of Norway. They are built by the Farmers' Party and are modern, efficient, and interesting. Over the stone fireplace in the coffee room was a representation of Dovregubben—the old man in Norse folk tales who inhabits Dovre. He has a long white beard and white hair, and wears a tiny red stocking cap. A bundle is slung over his shoulder and a crooked walking stick is in his hand.

"Do you know Peer Gynt?" my cousin asked. "Dovregubben got Peer Gynt to wear a 'Sunday tail' and led him a merry dance one day. . . . You may see him this afternoon."

Our little coffeepot was empty and it was train-time.

It was a pleasant journey. The leather-covered

seats in the third-class coaches are hard and have straight backs, but the compartments are clean and airy. Bands of color here and there make them cheerful, and one end of the compartment is entirely taken up with window. The washrooms and toilets are comfortable and, as on French railways, shared by both sexes. The Norwegians' penchant for decoration here seemingly reaches its limit—even the inside of the toilet bowls are adorned with floral sprays.

I saw no clusters of brown log houses around a *tun,* topped with an old *tun* tree, on my journey, though the farmhouses I did see in the region were solid-looking and of logs. Here again, as around Oslo, all the soil seemed under cultivation. Fields, green and squared, stretched up steep hillsides at an angle that seemed to defy even a scythe's blade. Beyond these, rose stands of timber that thinned and grew dwarfed as they approached the more distant heights, and finally, bowing as if in shame because they could climb no farther, surrendered to sparse grasses and barrens.

But it was not until the journey was more than half over, and afternoon coffee had been served in the dining car and another locomotive attached, that the slopes outside my window became really steep and high. Now I began to see what I had read about but never quite believed—waterfalls that fell

a mountain's height, ridges and precipices that alternated with cataclysmic suddenness, peaks and clefts that crossed and recrossed in crazy abandon. Norway at such places is, in its tender geologic age, like a colt that, snorting and blowing, prances and gallops bumptiously across the meadow, flying this way and that, full of devilry.

We had been swimming about in this fantastic world for several hours, when suddenly everyone seemed to become very busy finding and adjusting field glasses and crowding toward the windows on my side of the train. Maps were pulled forth from knapsacks and bags. The couple in the compartment opposite asked if they might come in.

"*Vaer so god,*" I said. "What's happening?"

"We are coming to Snøhytta," they said.

Around the next bend, we saw it in the blue distance, shining white. It seemed aloof to our gaze. Glasses traveled swiftly from hand to hand.

I observed with surprise that none of the people in the coach were tourists or foreigners. They were all Norwegians, and most of them had seen Snøhytta before.

It was not the first time I had been surprised at the Norwegians' interest in and complete familiarity with their own country. They know the name of every peak, every stream, every community around them. Or, if they do not know, they want to learn.

Was it habit, I wondered? Had they, through long generations of living in the same region, locked out by glacier, fjord and icy moor from other regions, become so used to looking in and back on themselves that they had learned always to find something new in the old, or a joy in the rediscovery of the old? Or was it a result of the national consciousness that first enraptured them a hundred years ago, when they found themselves, to their own astonishment, a nation? When they, after having been so long a people who had always looked abroad for what they thought was worth while in art, intellect, and beauty, suddenly found that they themselves had the stuff of which such things are made?

After the peak (and the fact that it is less than 8,000 feet high does not make it look less impressive), came a rapid downward coast. The dwarf birches along the track grew taller and taller as we sped to lower levels and richer soil. At last they stood again in lofty groves, their white trunks gleaming in the misty air against the dark wet green of spruce and other conifers.

Now we were in Trondheim *stift*—next to Tromsö *stift* the most northerly. It would be even lighter here at midnight than it had been in Lillehammer, for now it was just midsummer. The next evening would be St. John's Eve.

"What is St. John's Eve?" I had asked Uncle Brage

when he had remarked that I would be coming to the home town of the family on an appropriate day.

"Don't you know what St. John's Eve is?" he asked. "It's plain to see you were reared in a heathen land."

Now I knew St. John's Eve was Midsummer's Eve, when families in Norway gathered to build a bonfire at midnight.

At North Cape now, on the Arctic, the sun would not set at all.

The light evening seemed colder, too, than Lillehammer evenings had been, as, from time to time, I stepped from the train onto wooden platforms at the little towns where *Dovregubben* paused.

I remembered having heard that Trondheim was a cold city, and that Tronders, the people who came from there, were stiff and cold too. The Tronder is characterized, I had heard, by his fleeting humor and quick-vanishing spontaneity, like the short-lived warmth of Trondheim summers, when, sometimes in early August, the leaves of the birches begin to yellow. But while it lasts, the Trondheim summer is rich and warm and fruitful; and, they say, once you have won a Tronder's heart, you are sure of a warmth that is dependable and recurring.

It was here in Trondelagen that the idea of a country to be known as Norway, or Noreg (the way North), was born. In the ninth century this island-

dotted coast was occupied by numerous clans and families with no common bonds, busying themselves on what land they could find with cattle breeding and grain growing. Between seasons, when times were dull, groups from each of these clans would pile into dragon-headed boats they had made and invade other bays, or *viks*, mostly southward—sometimes, indeed, as far south as England and Ireland. They called taking these excursions going a-viking, and they themselves came to be called Vikings.

In 872 one of them, Halvdan the Dark (so-called to distinguish him from his fair-haired son who followed in his footsteps) undertook to bring all these clans under a single ruler—himself. He succeeded in his project, and chose Trondelagen for the seat of his kingdom, for it was the most arable northerly section along the coast. His son, Harald the Fair-haired, continued the unification. He established headquarters near the mouth of the River Nid at a place called Lade i Strinden, and built a temple there where people could bring their white heifers on a midsummer's night to offer to the fructifying gods.

Three generations later, a man named Olaf Tryggvassøn, great-great-grandson of Harald the Fair-haired, bulwarked his work by building a market place alongside the kingly quarters at Lade. This leader, Olaf Tryggvassøn, had been to England

when he was young and had been baptized in the Holy Roman Catholic Church. He abandoned the sacrificial temple when he took over Lade in 997 and built a different kind of structure, a building surmounted with two crossed sticks, in the style he had seen abroad.

But most of the people thereabout did not like this type of temple as well as the kind they were used to, and in three years Olaf Tryggvasson and his ideas were temporarily undone.

Another descendant of Harald the Fair-haired now mounted the throne and he proceeded more judiciously. He too had been abroad and had been baptized. But he took more time to tell people of his findings. He went from one *gård,* or estate, to the other, telling the people about all the things he had seen and heard. He told a story well and soon people began to gather and come to him to hear what he had to say. At last, someone suggested that they build the kind of temple he had seen, because the first one of that kind, with the two crossed sticks on top, had been burned down in 1015, together with the market place on the River Nid.

The new King, the hard-working Harald Haraldsøn, agreed that, yes, a temple like that would be a fine thing.

While a good many of the people roundabout wanted a new temple, some of the King's own chiefs

preferred the status quo and took up arms against their chief. There was a great battle at Sticklestad in 1030, thirty-six years before the Normans won the Battle of Hastings and conquered England.

The good King died on the battlefield. His soldiers, fighting without their chief, rescued his body from the mud and buried it in the clean sand bordering the River Nid.

Many people who had heard his stories mourned him and continued to talk about him. His spirit lived.

Two of his lieutenants saw this, and developed a plan to start a revolt among the people against the victorious chiefs. They knew that if they could give the people some physical representation of the King's memory, they might be able to crystallize their interest and arouse them to militant action. They chose the King's own decaying body for this object. They dug the corpse out of the sand, placed it in a chest, set it on the altar of the church he had built, and pronounced it holy.

The plan worked. People gathered from all parts to stand in reverence before the chest that held the King's remains. Pilgrimages began. In less than five years the chiefs who had conquered him were driven out of town and the son of the sainted Harald Haraldssøn, now known as Saint Olaf, was hailed as their chief.

In that way Christianity and the State in Norway became in a great degree identical. The town on the River Nid was the first citadel of their power.

For long the town was called Nidaros (meaning, the place at the mouth of the river), but when, in the sixteenth century, the Hanseatic merchants came in and took over the city's trade and Norway fell victim to Danish exploitation, the town began to be called Trondhjem.

When Danish rule was sloughed off in 1814 under Jean-Baptiste, and Sweden's hold was shaken, the proud Norwegians declared that the town should again be called "Nidaros." For was it not the real *Norwegian* name? There was a long controversy about it. "Nidaros" was so old it was new. It seemed strange now. Yet many felt the name "Trondhjem" was a relic of Norwegian servitude.

At last a compromise was reached: The name "Nidaros" was dropped, but "Trondhjem" was spelled in *landsmål,* or the revived old Norwegian tongue. Henceforth it would be "Trondheim."

Dovregubben was swinging easily down the shoulder of a wooded ridge and the blue surface of the fjord was beginning to flash before our eyes.

I wondered if I would know my Uncle Hallfred. . . .

I did at once, though not because I remembered

him. By some strange chemistry of blood, we recognized one another at exactly the same moment.

He was a merry man, with a round face and a round stomach. With him were several merry cousins—Astri, Svanhild and Torbjørn. Aunt Asbjørg, I thought, was waiting at Rognli. . . .

When we were all in Uncle's car, someone observed with careful casualness that I must have met my aunt on the way, for she had left for Oslo that morning by the south-journeying *Dovregubben*. . . .

That was why, perhaps, I heard only half of what Cousin Astri was telling me—that, *there* to the left, was Lade Church where Saint Olaf had labored. And that *there,* in the distance, was the present Cathedral.

In a few minutes we were at Rognli, Uncle Hallfred's villa.

"Why, it looks like a Swiss chalet, Uncle Hallfred," I said. I had recovered now.

He was pleased. And later, indoors, when he had shown me the *fest sal,* or banquet room, with its huge crystal chandelier, he pointed out with pride that the marble in the fireplace had come from Italy.

I felt I had come far from Maihaugen. . . .

We had *kveldsmat* together, my cousins and uncle and I. That at least, was no different. *Kveldsmat* is the same over all of Norway: bread and cheese, milk and tea, a platter of cold pink ham and a tin of an-

chovy or sardines. Uncle Hallfred pressed more and more bread on us and filled our glasses with milk several times. For, he said, little girls should drink *lots* of milk. . . .

We talked a long time, Uncle Hallfred and I, after my cousins—daughters of Uncle Jakob—had left. He sat in a huge, plush-covered chair with his back to the lace curtains—like *kveldsmat,* the same over all of Norway. He held an expensive cigar in his short fingers. He spoke English.

"You seem like an American business man, Uncle," I told him.

"You mean I have some 'push'?" he asked.

That was it exactly. He had "push."

Uncle Hallfred had been in the States for ten years. His elder brother, Jakob, had gone to America, and one summer when he had been home to Norway, he had taken his youngest brother back to the States with him. Hallfred had just finished the civil engineer course in the Technical School at Trondheim, and Jakob's accounts of the big land awaiting exploitation brought a vision like a golden rainbow across the sea to the young engineer. Canton, Ohio, claimed him first, then the Great Northern Railroad in St. Paul, and at last an engineering firm in Montana. The dam he built there still stands.

But Hallfred, the Tronder, returned in the end to Trondelagen. For, as he said now:

"I *believe* we get more out of life here than in America. I *believe* we do."

But he did not look certain. Whatever it was that *people* got out of life either in Norway or America, Uncle Hallfred seemed like a man unsatisfied with what *he,* for his part, got.

Yet he was a wealthy man. I wondered what the trouble was. . . .

In addition to his engineering practice, he held the position of appraiser for a large insurance company and this kept him traveling from one part of Norway to another much of the time. He was happiest when traveling—"on the go." He was the first Norwegian I had met who did not prefer quiet days at home, above all.

It was long past midnight when he showed me to the room I had been assigned. It was his daughter's room. She was in Oslo with her mother for the week.

"That wing of the floor is rented out," he said, indicating the several doors to his left.

I could not explain at the time the vague surprise and disappointment I felt to hear that a part of the house was not in use by the family.

My room was icy. A darkless night is much colder than a black one. It was so light I could see a flock of gulls at roost on the ground in the field several hundred yards away. I opened the windowed door in my room and stepped out on the tiny balcony

that hung directly below the steeply pitched roof. The glass in the door was loose and about to fall out.

Directly below me was the garden. Here nothing was neglected. Its rows were meticulous, sloping down beneath fruit trees to a high hedge of currant bushes. Beyond the hedge was the road that led down toward Lade and Trondheim. Beyond the road lay the plowed field with the sleeping gulls and, at last, the wooded ridges, where the outskirts of the town lay outspread.

Uncle Hallfred had bought Rognli when he returned from America to Norway. He had settled in Lade i Strinda because he had been given employment by that commune.

I wondered as I stood on the balcony, if the American psychology of pride in *bigness* in itself had affected Uncle Hallfred during his years there. Or if pride in possessions, as such, had had anything to do with his buying this huge chalet. Obviously, he had never *needed* such a big place. His family had never been large. I was sure Uncle Hallfred had not come back from America wearing a heavy gold watch chain, but he *had* come back with a desire to buy—a Swiss-style chalet. Was Rognli more a show place than a home? Was Uncle Hallfred more American than Norwegian?

The chill midsummer air seemed to reach my bones. For once I did not mind the short Norwe-

gian beds for I had to lie with my knees to my chin anyway to keep warm.

Uncle had told me I could come to breakfast when I liked. He would breakfast at nine.

When I came downstairs, he was busy in the cow barn. To my astonishment, the cow barn was attached to the house. Its window faced the windows of the banquet hall across twenty feet of graveled court. Moreover, I did not know he kept a cow. I thought he was a business man.

I went out to the barn, where the maid said he could be found, and saw him standing in a stall, one hand on a cow's back, talking to her, brushing away wisps that had fallen upon her through the cracks in the floor of the hayloft above. Between times, he was directing Jonetta, the maid, how to care for her during the day. The cow had developed an infected udder and would have to be milked every hour, he said. At noon he wanted the *dreng,* or hired man, to bring a specimen of the milk to the veterinary in town.

He looked happy as he busied himself with these things, and he greeted me heartily. His hair was tousled and he had no collar on his shirt. He had been up since six, working with the *dreng* in the garden. There would be vegetables soon, he said.

And in a week or two they could begin cutting the hay.

"Why, this is a farm!" I said.

There were two cows, a calf, and a pig.

"You bet it is!" he laughed. "Look at that rhubarb!"

"Maybe you *have* to keep a cow? Milk isn't delivered—?"

"No, I keep a cow and grow hay because I like to. Out here in the morning is the best time of day for me. It's the peasant blood, I guess."

He said it teasingly as if he expected me to object. Then he took my arm and showed me the rest of his "farm." The neat green rows, the heavy fruit trees, the stands of rhubarb. (There was a cottar's house, too, but it was rented. A car stood outside!)

Whatever kind of blood it was, it was thicker than water, I thought, as I followed Uncle Hallfred in his garden and saw his enjoyment and felt his wish to make me feel at home.

While we were at breakfast—Uncle had had coffee and bread at six and now he was having oatmeal with a glass of still warm milk—Aunt Marianna called. Aunt Marianna was Uncle Jakob's widow. I rehearsed the plan of relationships quickly to myself as they talked. So many relatives at once were beginning to confuse me. She was calling to invite us to her house in Singsaker that evening. For it was

St. John's Eve, and perhaps the young American would like to see how St. John's Eve was celebrated in Norway?

"Excellent! Excellent!" Uncle Hallfred said. "Excellent! Thank you. Excellent!"

"Isn't it nice of Aunt Marianna to do that!" I exclaimed. "Because you know my father drowned a team of Uncle Jakob's horses—"

Uncle Hallfred burst into loud laughter. He enjoyed this strange American who was worrying over a team of horses drowned in Montana before she was born!

There were eight or ten cousins, with their husbands and wives, besides Aunt Marianna and Uncle Hallfred, gathered to view me. I felt as a freshman at college does when she is invited to a sorority tea just before bidding time. The burden of the gathering lay heavily on me. I was careful not to overdress. I knew they would look for "Americanisms" and I wanted to be Norwegian.

"We will say *du* to each other at once," Aunt Marianna said when Uncle Hallfred presented me.

That, at least, was a relief. I was not practiced in using *De,* for I had never spoken Norwegian outside the familiar family circle.

"I suppose you speak *landsmål,*" someone said. It was a cool beginning.

That team of black horses . . . it was a symbol of class distinction.

But it was a pleasant table of kindly people who sat down to the traditional St. John's Eve supper a few minutes later. All felt the strange bond of blood through the maze of unlike cultures, unlike worlds, with their symbols in language and manners.

"*Rømmegrøt, saft og spekerenkjot,*" Uncle Hallfred observed to me as we sat down. *Rommegrøt,* a thick white porridge made by bringing heavy rich cream slowly to a boil, a pinch of flour added, and the butter fat coaxed out by a gentle stirring with a wooden spoon, then poured back over as a sauce. *Saft,* a red berry juice mixed with water. *Spekerenkjøt,* dried reindeer meat. That is what one always has on St. John's Eve in Norway. Delicacies in observance of the day, for on St. John's Eve summer is at its height. The glorious summer that is never dark —a joyful respite from the long winter, when days are dark until ten or more in the morning, and over at four!

Afterwards, as midnight approaches, one builds a bonfire on the *tun,* whole families gather, and there is dancing to the tunes of fiddles and accordions. . . .

But we did not go to Byneset to build a bonfire on the *tun.* The old *gård* out there had been sold. The family was losing touch with the soil and the ancient practices.

The bonfires that we could see, across Singsaker, on the low ridges beyond, fluttered and faltered in a gray, incessant drizzle. There seemed to be no heart in them.

My two fair-haired cousins ("How is it two such fine girls aren't married?" Uncle Hallfred remarked to me in a whisper.) had donned the old Trondelagen type of dress for my entertainment. Full-pleated, blue-plaid skirts of wool, tight-fitting bodices of solid blue and white, full-sleeved blouses. In style, they were like the scarlet Gudbrandsdal costume. It was smart, nowadays, to have a costume of this sort, though twenty years ago only country girls wore them. Like the language, the costume was a symbol of Norway's integrity, though apparently people found it easier to accept the old dress styles than the old tongue.

The eldest of these cousins was a nurse, Montana-born; the other was a schoolteacher in Kristiansund, the Atlantic town just south of Trondheim. Their eyes were blue like the Tronder-blue of their garb.

With the coffee in the living-room an hour after supper, Uncle Hallfred produced a sweet white wine he had brought with him from his store in Rognli. When our glasses had been filled and raised once to a murmured *Skål,* a strange little ceremony began taking place. Two by two, murmured *Skåls* began traveling around the room. Aunt Marianna

raised her glass to me, Uncle Hallfred raised his first to her and then to me, my cousins each to me, one by one, until everyone had drunk, alone, with everyone else. It was a gracious procedure, a delicate interchange.

Uncle was to be gone all day, he said. Jonetta would take good care of me indoors and Tass, the old German police dog, would follow me outdoors if I cared to take any of the many walks around Rognli. He ordered the *dreng* to build a fire in the wood-burning heater in the "second parlor," opened drawers containing old photographs, and found me books. I had with me from the library at the Rectory a biography of Grandfather, written in *landsmål,* published by a "people's society," and Grandfather's own thin book about Byneset.

I settled down to meet my grandfather. A fine gray rain lay in the air, and below the garden the gulls were feeding on the worms which a plowman was turning up with the black earth. The birds settled like a blanket over a part of the field, and at intervals rose like a cloud and wheeled over the field, singing again together.

"You rowed steadfastly through the storm
And bent your back relentlessly
Against the tide and time . . ."

Three lines by the poet Hovden opened the book about Grandfather.

"It has been said," I read, "that O. J. Høyem was a chief without domain. One could better say that he was a chief whom none dared follow but who dared to go alone.

" 'Høyem was sharp as a razor,' wrote Anders Reitan. 'He was full of ideas. And he did not hide them away but laid them before people constantly, in speech and in writing. He was often ridiculed but he did not mind. Even though no one sided with him on an issue, he kept driving at it for years—yes, for as long as he lived. And he had the joy of seeing some of the things he had worked for realized. The rest would come in time, he believed.

"He was right. Since he died, much has happened here in Norway that would have gladdened the heart of the progressive, the patriot—Olaf Jakobson Høyem."

Grandfather! This was *my* grandfather!

I turned my book so that the light from the windows to the east, looking out on the garden, the plowed field, the gulls, the ridges, fell on my page. On the wall to my left, over another divan, hung a profile photograph of Grandfather. He had nice eyes. Deep lines ran to his temple. The lines on his cheeks held the promise of a smile. He wore a mustache and beard. A low wing collar and a bow tie.

His forehead was broad and high and, I guessed, white.

Around 1680, I read, there lived on the estate known as Horgheim, in Romsdal, a man named Jakob Eiriksson. His son was called Ivar. He went to school in Molde and learned to read and write. He was heir to the estate and he was, besides, the mayor of the rural community in which he lived. So he was an important man but he drank away both estate and mayoralty. With his mother, his wife and his son, he moved to Molde and became a tailor. In 1757 they moved again, farther north to Byneset, that spit of land that lies enfolded in the arms of Trondheim fjord. The son, whose name was Jakob, was then seventeen.

The farm they came to on Byneset was called Høyem. It lay on a rise in the land that swept back from the fjord above the mouth of the little river Gaul. It was barren of trees except on its very summit where a few patches of conifers stood bowing to the smiling fjord.

Jakob, the boy, grew to manhood here and was married twice. One of his sons, Olav Jakobsson—and Høyem, after the farm they lived on now—became the teacher in the community parochial school in 1798, and in 1816 was appointed *klokkar* or parish clerk, and leader of the church singing, as well. He was an able man and, for those days, a learned one.

People called him "Ol' Jakobso'," and he was the only teacher, the only "learned" man on Byneset, for eighteen years. He was lively and talkative and a hard worker. He had to be, for there were at that time between two hundred and two hundred and fifty school children in Byneset. It was twenty-five years before he had an assistant.

His son, Jakob Olsson Høyem, was born in 1804 and left Høyem when he became of age to go to the military school for noncommissioned officers that had been established in Trondheim. He finished his course when he was twenty-four and returned to Byneset to help his father as teacher, parish clerk, and church singer. (This Jakob Høyem was the one that I thought looked like a Salem witch burner, with his deep sharp eyes—my great-grandfather.)

He had a hundred and fifty pupils in classes of eighty each. There were twelve desks with five or six pupils at each desk and the half-dozen or so pupils who had no desks sat on benches along the walls! But work went fast. Høyem was a good teacher, stimulating and trained. Besides his early military training he had special teacher's training, for when the first teachers' training school in that part of Norway opened in 1839, Høyem had turned his duties as teacher back to his father and had gone off to enroll in the new institution, though he was thirty-five then and a married man with a family.

He was certainly the oldest student in the school. During the year he attended, he kept up his work as parish clerk and singer, walking each Sunday the long way from Klaebu, where the training school was, to Byneset.

His energy and spirit sometimes stirred the people of the region to amazement and suspicion. This was particularly true the time he brought four *salmodikonar,* primitive one-stringed musical instruments, into the schoolroom and set four of his pupils to playing. Two boys played tenor and bass and two girls played soprano and alto.

It was a little hard, at first, to get the instruments in tune. The players were nervous and the audience ready to burst with laughter at the unusual procedure. But finally they were ready and the "music" began.

It went well. There came to be more singing than ever in Jakob Høyem's school and there had already been a great deal.

Jakob conducted school in the Byneset dialect of *landsmål,* the one that was native to the children, though he had been trained at the teachers' training school to use *riksmål,* the language of "refinement." Only on religious subjects did he follow the book and use Danish.

Jakob's eldest son was Grandfather. He was born in 1830 on the farm known as *klokkar gård,* or the

farm provided by the Church and State for the parish clerk.

A few stories remain from his boyhood: He was still very young when he began to help his father, herding the sheep and cows and goats on the parish farm. One day when he was out herding, he lost his pocket-knife in a crevice in the rock he sat on.

"Then I prayed God to help me find it," he said, "for that was Father's knife."

Another time, when he was ten years old, he was sent to bring a load of peat to his grandparents. While out on the bog loading the wagon with the dried bricks, a pack of wolves appeared and surrounded him and his horse.

"I crawled up on the load of peat and began heaving peat at them and shouting that they should go away. . . . Luckily, the horse stood still but I remember how he shivered with fear. Pretty soon some neighbors happened along and the wolves loped off toward Guastad."

And one Sunday in the fall he was sitting alone on a hill above his home when someone brought him the news that he had a new little brother.

"That's good," he said. "Then I won't have to herd goats alone any more."

He went to school to his father and in 1848 went off to the same teachers' training school his father had gone to. There were dormitories attached and

the students—only men aspired to be teachers in those days—would gather after the day's classes to talk and sing and argue together. Sometimes they would sit thus until dawn. . . .

For the days of Grandfather's youth were eventful days in the world. There were revolutions on the continent—foremost of all in France.

In Norway, too, things were happening. In 1849 alone no less than 216 workingmen's associations had been formed, with the usual hostilities attending, and there was trouble between employers and employees on other grounds as well.

Grandfather found himself in the midst of every argument. The revolutionary fervor of the times seized him and he argued passionately over the right of the workingman to organize and fight for a place in the sun. Enlightenment for the lower classes—particularly for the farmers—and freedom of expression became his ideals.

In the fall following his completion of the training course, he was appointed assistant teacher in the parochial school at Lade, the ancient site of St. Olaf's church. And a little later, he advanced to the staff of a public school, one of the first, in the three-islanded town of Kristiansund.

Then he went abroad. He wrote an account of it later, in 1877, for the newspaper, *Addresseavis,* in Trondheim.

While I was teaching in Kristiansund, something seemed to go wrong with my chest. I went to a doctor and he advised me to stop teaching or at least take a year's leave of absence and go south for a while. It was bad for me to teach and study so much, he said. It was bitter medicine, for I had just finished the teachers' training school and I liked to teach. Besides, that was all I *could* do. . . .

I applied for a leave of absence and a member of the wholesale firm, P & L, one of whose children I had been tutoring after school hours, offered to lend me some money. They gave me a letter of credit on a firm in Hamburg.

So one evening early in the spring of 1854 I left Fosna by steamboat, headed for Lübeck, Germany, to take a business course and a course in Italian bookkeeping.

It was just at the time the Crimean War was breaking out and my money began going much faster than I expected, for traveling expenses were high. The coastwise steamers going south were packed with soldiers being moved to Horten. Since I was traveling privately I was forced to go first class, for all the ordinary accommodations were taken!

But the trip went well and finally one night I went aboard at Viken and started southward from Vallø saltworks to Kiel in Holstein.

We traveled fast, unbelievably fast, toward Denmark's northermost tip, but I thought the trip would never end from there to Storevelt.

At last we came one night to Nyborg. It was pitch-dark and the water all around us was crowded with boats and dangerously shallow. Everything was quiet and ominous.

Our captain decided to fire a shot.

And *that* livened things up! We found we were lying under the very noses of huge French and English men-of-war that were lying, all lights out, in the harbor. . . .

An English inspection boat, fully manned, drew up alongside. Officers came aboard. They wanted full particulars from us—where we came from, where we were going, what cargo we had. . . . When we had finally satisfied them we were innocents and they had left our ship, the French inspectors came. We had to go through the whole thing again more thoroughly, even, than before.

The men-of-war were now all alight. It was both exciting and depressing to see the thousands of port-holes in these murderous castles shining at us through the blackness of the night. The *Duke of Wellington,* especially, looked ominous.

At last we were free to go our way and the next morning we steamed up Kielerfjord. There on the banks it was wholly summer and groves of pale green beech trees lined the strand. To see them was especially pleasing for me for only a few days before I had been tramping about in snow and slush in Fosna.

My smattering of German came in good stead the moment I landed. I had never had much practice in it but I got from the dock to the railroad station with little trouble and soon I was on a train on my way to Holstein.

On the evening of May 2nd, I came to Altona and Hamburg. The next morning I reached Lübeck, my destination.

I went first of all to a doctor, for I feared my state of

health demanded that I be under treatment. I was examined and given medicine that was no more than *Obershclesische Salzbrunner,* and a brisk walk every morning! There was nothing wrong with my chest, the doctor said. I was very glad, for I had been afraid consumption had set in.

I started out at once on my new mode of life. I searched out the best, most gifted, teachers I could find and I put myself in touch with Dispasjor C. Rosenberg, a taskmaster if there ever was one in teaching foreigners bookkeeping and business correspondence. Pupils came to him from over all of Europe.

I also made the acquaintance of a highly educated German who wanted to learn Swedish. We started exchange lessons and that way I saved a good deal of money and learned more German than I ever could have in a classroom.

In other ways, too, I mingled with cultured Germans. I was surprised and disappointed at the young Norwegians and Swedes I saw around me for the way in which they stuck together and talked only Norwegian. It seemed to me they were not availing themselves of the advantages of a stay abroad.

One Saturday evening during the first part of August, a merchant from Oslo paid me a visit. He had been on a trip to Hamburg and while he was on the continent he wanted to travel and see something of Germany, particularly Berlin and Sanssouci. But he knew very little German and was afraid to try the trip alone.

In Hamburg he had met my friend and patron from the P & L wholesale firm in Kristiansund. "Go to Lübeck," my friend had told him. "There you will find a man who will certainly go with you and act as guide

and interpreter for you. I will give you a letter to him and tell him to go with you at my expense."

It was a lucky meeting for both the Oslo merchant and for me. I went at once to the Lübeck police to get my passport in order. It was war time and passports were important.

Early next morning, on Sunday, we bought tickets for Berlin. I was going further than I thought when I set out from Fosna!

The weather was beaming and so were we. The trees, the sky—everything seemed beautiful.

As we came to Wittenberg on the Prussian border the train stopped. "Out with your passports!" came the order.

There I stood. In my haste I had left my passport behind in Lübeck!

I told the officers I felt sure it was in my baggage in the baggage coach. They let me by, but as we sped toward Brandenberg I grew more and more depressed. For I *knew* that since my passport was not in my pocket, I did not have it at all.

When we reached Berlin, a detail of police officers laid a cordon around the passengers on the platform, leaving only a small passageway for us to pass through, one by one. "Out with your passports!" came the order again.

A Lieutenant Baum examined each one carefully. . . .

Nearly everyone had no difficulty at all. Only a Swiss and his wife and I, poor sinner, were held and arrested as spies!

I had wit enough to whisper in the ear of my companion that he should go to Lutz Hotel in Unter den

Linden. With that we parted. He went to Lutz Hotel by cab and the Swiss and his wife and I were escorted to a patrol wagon!

We were taken directly to Police Station Number One. There the officers in charge took us over. . . .

The Swiss and his wife were allowed to go free, for the wife had been at a watering place up in Pomerania and had a passport of a sort from there, and the man was freed because he was plainly her husband who had been up there to fetch her home.

But *I*—I, on the other hand, was escorted back to the patrol wagon and driven to Police Station Number Two, then to Police Station Number Three and was examined and cross-examined at length at each, with the result that I was escorted back to the patrol wagon and taken to Police Station Number Four.

And here, to my joy, I heard them say at last in a whisper among themselves that Lieutenant Baum was a fool. It was plain to see I was no spy!

I would be detained in prison until Monday, they told me. At that time I would be free.

Detained in prison until Monday!

"Call the Lübeck police," I said. They would confirm my story that I had secured a passport there the evening before. But that they did not want to be bothered doing. They made the excuse that there was no telegraph line between Lübeck and Berlin.

Now I was both angry and afraid. Up until now I had kept cool, reasoning to myself that in the end I would surely be freed and allowed to go my way.

I hit on the idea of asking them to take me to the Norwegian-Swedish legation. The Consul von Hoch-

schild would help me. After all I was a Norwegian citizen!

Now they began treating me with respect—both because I dared make the demand and because I had the sense to make it.

But they demurred. That would not be necessary, they said. I told them I had a traveling companion and I asked that he be taken along as a witness. They began discussing the case among themselves at the other end of the room. They even laughed a little because I had had the nerve to ask them to hurry so that I might go to the opera that night. I had only this one Sunday in Berlin, I told them.

They decided to see if I were telling them the truth. For the fifth time I entered the patrol wagon, this time under heavy military escort. Off we went, up one street and down the other, it seemed, until we stopped outside the Lutz Hotel. It was one of the finest hotels in Berlin and I had chosen it so as to impress them. I had to pretend that I felt sure of myself, though I was an utter stranger and alone in the clutches of the law, suspected of being a dangerous character. . . .

As we had been driving through the streets, I had asked questions of my guard about all I saw around me. I had been speaking German long enough now so that I could speak the language well. The guards were kind in answering, and I learned more about Berlin on those long drives that Sunday than I would ever have learned otherwise. I would not have missed them for anything—afterwards. And I learned so much about the police organization that I felt like an expert on the subject ever after.

When we got to the hotel we learned that, yes, a

man by the name I gave was registered there. Now I had to find out if he were in. It had of course helped my case that someone by that name was really there, but it was no proof. Any scoundrel could know that much about some traveler he had met! These fellows were not Berlin law officers for nothing.

So we trudged up the five flights of stairs to the sixth floor where my friend had his room, found the door, and crowded in—my police escort and I.

And there stood our man!

Now it was necessary to ascertain if the man knew me. I walked towards him and he started towards me, exclaiming in Norweigan:

"My God, are you here at last!"

But these words the German policemen could not understand. They stepped between us and asked him:

"Kennen Sie diesen Mann?"

I held my breath. Did he understand that much German? Luckily, he did, especially since all his nerves and senses were tingling with excitement, for he saw I was in a critical situation.

"Jawohl, jawohl!" he said over and over.

Thereupon I was free.

I was a happier man, and so was P—— who had lost his interpreter but now had found him again. The poor man had not dared to leave the hotel for even an instant.

And we got to the opera on time too and saw *Aladdin's Lamp,* though it was sheer luck that we were able to buy tickets at that late hour.

I cannot begin to write about all the fine and glorious things we saw the next day in Berlin and Sanssouci. It

would take altogether too much space. I shall only name some of the things that every Norwegian who visits Berlin should see. . . .

Grandfather returned from Germany in better health and spirits than when he left, but now he had lost his taste for teaching. Or rather his interest in telegraphy, developed by his observation in Germany, overshadowed it. Telegraphy, he believed, was going to be a great thing and would pay better than teaching. He would go to Stavanger, he decided. There was a school of telegraphy opening there.

He enrolled, and when he had finished he became the operator in the first telegraph station at Fosna. In 1859 he was transferred to the telegraph office in Trondheim.

One day one of the directors of the Bank of Norway in Trondheim called and offered Grandfather a position in the bank—that of "controller of the paper currency." The salary proffered was several times more than what he got in the little telegraph office.

Grandfather was enjoying telegraphy and the public's skepticism as to its practicality, but the salary the bank offered made him gasp. He was married now, and the year previous a baby had arrived—a girl baby he had named Inga.

He took the job.

He lived to regret it.

For in spirit he was a teacher and a pioneer. Sitting in a secluded office keeping order in other men's work was stifling to him. His energies were not exhausted by it. Carrying out the orders from the Storting to issue or not to issue more bills was not enough. If he had had some part in determining whether or not new currency should be issued, or if he had had to fight for or against such an issue, arguing, teaching, persuading, pioneering—then his spirit would have been more nearly satisfied and he a better adjusted man.

But, because there was no outlet for his social and cultural interests in the office, he found it outside, after office hours. When he had learned the routine of his work in the bank and had familiarized himself with the other departments as well and there was nothing more to study, the thought occurred to him that Byneset, the rural community where he and his people before him had been born, ought to have a bank. There was no sense, he thought, in the farmers bringing their money to a bank in town and then paying high interest rates when they needed to borrow—if, indeed, they could get a loan at all! The farmers ought to have their own bank. The idea burned in him and it was not long before he acted.

He laid *his* plans. The year previous he had published his book about Byneset—an account of its

history, its terrain, its ways and mores, its leading families. He knew it well and he knew whom to approach with his idea and how to place it before them. And he knew banking practice.

He worked out a letter for Byneset leaders. He gave them full information on how to start a bank for themselves, incorporating suggestions of his own on the best location, the best practices suited for Byneset needs.

The idea caught on. Twelve hundred *kroner* were raised among the farmers by volunteer subscription, and in less than a year the bank was running.

That act was the first mark against him in the records of the Bank of Norway.

The second mark not to his favor was that, for a professional man with a dignified bank position, he took an unbecoming interest in the "vulgarians." He actually defended *landsmål,* and in a newspaper called *Ferdamannen* in Bergen he had written an article in the language of the country people. In the introduction to his book, too, the year before, he had seemed to *apologize* for not writing in *landsmål!*

> This book about Byneset should be in the language of Byneset, he wrote. But out of consideration for those good people who have made the publication of this book possible, I offer it in *riksmål.* I have made

some modifications, however, so that the words will not sound any stranger than absolutely necessary for the less privileged and less book-read readers.

The people of Byneset accepted him and his book about them in various ways. Some were glad and grateful to him, some (particularly the pietists) were outraged. The book was actually burned in some homes. It treated too familiarly of sacred matters!

But the thing closest of all to Grandfather's heart was the public high school he started on Byneset.

For a long time he had been interested in seeing public high schools established in the country districts, as they had been in the towns and cities. The tendency in the country was to hold to the parochial school, which was often confined to children under twelve or so and was cramped and narrow in many ways, Grandfather thought. At every public meeting where he found an opportunity, he talked about the desirability of a public school.

At last, in the fall of 1874, he felt the time had come to start a public school on Byneset. He gathered a few friends around him and called a meeting.

Many came. Grandfather had arranged to have speakers come from neighboring parishes—preachers and parish clerks—who were friendly to the idea. The principal of the recently established public school at Stjørdal came also.

Grandfather gave a talk on the use of *landsmål* in the schools. There were many there who disapproved of the new language movement, including some of the farmers themselves who felt that to be educated certainly meant to be one not like themselves. But everyone had to admit that "Høyem knew what he was talking about and that he was sincere. It was astonishing to hear a man so cultured in his ways speak with affection and respect about the people of Byneset and their ways and speech. *He* did not seem to feel that higher education meant growing *away* from that to which one was born."

Interest in the matter of the public school for Byneset grew rapidly after this first meeting, and in 1878 a public high school was opened on the parish farm known as Høyem.

A large crowd gathered for the opening. Many public-spirited men from Trondheim, men whose views had marked them as "radicals," came and talked.

It was a cold but clear day [Grandfather wrote afterward]. The farm where we were to meet and where the school was to be held, lies in a pleasant vale that stretches down to the arm of Trondheim fjord between Borgsen and Bynes into which empties the little river Gaul. The name of the farm is Høyem, the birthplace

of Johan Nordal Brun, the playwright and poet whose gifts were finally rewarded by a call to the episcopacy. His portrait hung on the wall over our heads. Someone had decorated it for the occasion with evergreen branches, the only green thing the winter day could yield. . . .

When we arrived at the farm at twelve, noon, a crowd of men and women had already assembled, and it was difficult to find even standing room in the parlor and rooms adjoining. There must have been more than two hundred persons present. The speakers' desk and the walls of the room were decorated with evergreen and flags.

The meeting opened with singing, and the parish clerk, my younger brother, made the welcoming address. . . .

"We are not denying Christianity," the speakers said, "by sponsoring a school supported voluntarily by the people like this, apart from the Church. But we want a free and independent and *informed* people. We want a religious life that tends to bring out the best in people by appealing to the love in their hearts for one another, and not to fear. In wanting this, we are not denying Christianity. We believe this public school will serve the Church, not destroy it. I do not see how any friend of enlightenment can fail to rejoice at this sight of the peasants themselves awakening and establishing this school by voluntary contributions. . . ."

One of the biggest contributors to the school was a rich widow, Rangdi Hangeras. Grandfather had

interested her in the idea and persuaded her to will twenty thousand *kroner* to the project. But at the last moment the pietists prevailed upon her to remove this provision from her will. She told Grandfather: "They told me that the more young people that go to this public school, the more young people there will be who will go to hell." Grandfather calmed her fears and she returned her support.

Besides the "radicals" who spoke, Grandfather's father, Old Jakob, who had horrified the pietists by introducing "musical instruments" into the schoolroom, was at the meeting. He gave a talk about the new order of things that was coming to Byneset. Was he, too, in his heart, afraid that hell was drawing closer? He and his father and grandfather before him had never heard of a school of this sort outside the Church. He had been a radical in his day too, but a man can go just so far. Perhaps he did feel lost and lonely that clear winter day as he heard his sons reject the old ways and pledge themselves to the new.

Just as Grandfather was a radical in culture, he was a radical in politics. He belonged to the Left and made no secret of it, although it was not entirely safe for a relatively small-salaried banking employee with a growing family to take that stand. He lived to realize that in full and bitter measure.

The *Storting* had voted in 1872 and 1874, and

again in 1877, that members of the Swedish Parliament should attend the sessions of the Storting. There were matters pertaining to foreign policy that needed the full co-operation of both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian union. It was believed that, if members of *Riksråd* attended the *Storting* sessions, better understanding and co-operation could be achieved.

King Oskar II, however, had steadfastly refused to recognize the wishes of *Storting* in the matter. The Rightist Press, too, with *Morgenbladet* in the lead, was denouncing the Leftist leader, Johann Sverdrup, who had led the Storting in its stand for open and free discussion, as a radical who sought to arouse class hatred.

But Johann Sverdrup and men like him won the battle. Slender, scholarly little Johann Sverdrup, imbued with the ideals of the American and French revolutions, persuaded the *Storting* to overrule the King's veto!

There were celebrations throughout Norway.

"I had been sick for days," Grandfather wrote, "worrying lest there were not enough real democrats in the *Storting*. So when on the ninth of June we heard that there were, and that the *Storting* had actually saved our freedom and independence as a people, it sent a thrill through me, and through all of Norway. It was a promise of more and more

growth for us all, more opportunities for developing ourselves."

At that time Grandfather was active in Trondheim's Labor Association. It was not primarily a political organization, but it became involved in politics to a certain extent just the same. He was elected officer before long and nominated as a delegate to the national convention soon to be held in Oslo. Immediately the Rightists in the association came to life. The Trondheim papers were full of shameless attacks on him, both editorially and anonymously. They applied all the terms they could think of that would frighten good people: "a follower of Gruntvig" (Gruntvig was a church liberal), "a language vulgarian," "a radical," "a republican," "an agitator." . . . Those were the terms, in those days, there, that carried the stigma of irresponsibility and immorality.

But when the matter came up before the association for a vote, and the group working against him within the association were asked to present their charges, the worst thing they could charge him with was that on June 10, 1880, he had, in the name of the association, sent a telegram of thanks to Johann Sverdrup and his friends for their fight against the King's right to veto measures enacted by the *Storting*.

He was elected a delegate.

But one day, before the convention, Bank Director H. Lundgree called him to his office and berated him for the telegram to Sverdrup and warned him that his job was not so secure but that it was possible to lose it if he persisted in his activity as a Leftist in the town's labor association.

"When I replied," Grandfather wrote later, "that it seemed to me that surely, as a man of fifty, I had a right to my own ideas, I got the severe reply that I could have what ideas I liked, but that I did *not* have permission to express them.

"It angered me but it also frightened me for I had seven small children at home now. . . ."

A group from the minority in the labor association called on him next with the announcement that, if he spoke out at the Oslo convention, they would "make things hot for him." The newspapers, they said, had been asked to make special note of what he said.

"So I was quiet and did not speak out at the convention or at the meetings of the association back in Trondheim—until on May 17, 1881, when I again praised Sverdrup, then at his height, in a speech before the same labor association. The democrats applauded wildly. . . ."

And the day following the next board of directors' meeting at the bank, Grandfather received a communication from the board.

Mr. Controller of the Paper Currency O. J. Høyem:

Although the paper currency supply which the Bank now has printed and on hand will not last much over a year, it has, as you know, become much easier to print up new supplies because of the improved printing methods. The Board of Directors has decided, therefore, to suspend for the present the work of the paper currency department which you head.

In the meantime, in order to give you and those under you as much time as possible in which to find other positions, the department will remain in operation until June 30, 1882, at which time your connection with the Bank of Norway will end, together with the connection of your subordinates whom you will please inform of this fact.

H. Lundgreen S. Strom F. Lorck Selmer

A week after Grandfather left the bank's employ, the department was again in full operation—under a new controller of paper currency.

"Yes, Høyem," one of his colleagues remarked to him on his last day there, "a Nemesis walks through the world."

For four long years, Grandfather walked the streets of the town he loved so well—without work, and without income—save what he could earn writing articles for such newspapers as would accept them. These four years wore into his soul a raw wound that never entirely healed.

In order to prove to his townspeople that he had

not done anything wrong in the bank, Grandfather demanded that the directors give him a letter acknowledging his efficiency and honesty as an employee. This he received. He began at once to prepare a pamphlet for the *Storting,* setting forth his case.

He won consideration. The bank was forced to give him half pay and later, when the Board of Directors' personnel was changed, Grandfather was given back his position.

Some years before, he had built a house for himself and his large family on the edge of Trondheim, in a section known as Ilen. It lay not much more than a long stone's throw from the fjord, and on the other side, toward the Trondheim ridges, was an open space that he led the neighborhood in developing as a park. Here, on May 17, 1894, he was the official speaker, appointed by the *Storting,* in the Independence Day celebrations. I read the yellowed clippings.

Fellow citizens!

As I came out this morning and heard the band's horns and trumpets in the streets, marching out here to Ilen's park, I thought of Sverre's birch-bark horn—that awakener of men's souls. And a May day 714 years ago stood vibrant before me, but ten days later than this one—fifty years after the beginning of the civil war of those days and sixty years before its close. It was the day

of a big battle. Much blood was shed and the battleground was just this spot, this park of Ilen, where we stand now, and I am moved in spiritual understanding to say: "Take off your shoes for you stand on consecrated ground!" (Great applause.) Not consecrated because it was a bitter battle but because it led directly to the preservation of freedom for the spirit of our common people and of their integrity as men.

The day changed the course of history in Norway. For the independence party, the party of the people, triumphed—the little people, the poor and underprivileged, the cottars, the workers. In a word, the *Birkebein,* led by Sverre himself, triumphed. And it was just this opposition party, this victorious band of spirited men under Sverre, which that morning marched out here to Ilen from old Nidaros (just as we, the common people, do today) to fight against those who looked down on the common people—the King's men, the feudal lords, the archbishop and other prelates, who, in league with some of our own countrymen, accepted the aid of another land, Denmark, to battle Sverre and his little men here. On this very spot, Sverre, with his *Birkebein,* met . . . King Magnus' men, who stormed down from this cliff wall here behind us. . . . The result of the victory here in 1180, together with the victory a year before in *Kalvskindet* where Erling Skakke fell, was a people's victory in every way, spiritually as well as materially. For, while the civil war continued, the last half of it was a time of enlightenment and growth for the people of the country toward a free-spirited, independent nation.

As we allow this picture to pass before our eyes, it seems to me that we must all see in it a true reflection

of the present. For are we not living in a time of civil war, and one of the most serious character, even though no blood is being spilled? There is a battle every day on nearly every park in our country.

And is not the nature of the adversaries about the same as it was in 1180? It is not necessary to examine and explain at length to prove the similarity. Even the equivalent of the support that Sverre's adversaries sought and found outside the country—in Denmark as well as in the persons of the Catholic priests—is apparent now. Yes, it is still a battle of the free-spirited, independence-loving people against the powerful few. The only difference is that the victor today has not yet emerged. The battle is still on. But we are proud to say that we, who stand here today, stand with the victors of the past. . . .

The name Sverre means a whirl that holds its periphery about it by the power of its centrum. Just that way Sverre drew the people around him. A true king is but the expression, the executor, of the people's will that comes to him through the laws they enact. Lofty position enough, I should think! Not until such an arrangement prevails does a king become a chief of men rather than an autocrat over slaves.

The equivalent of this whirl among us today, its cohesive power, is the spirit of our people. That and nothing else is what is driving us to become a free and independent country. We believe in that spirit, that need for freedom in us, and I, for my part, am proud of the privilege of addressing you beneath this emblem of our equality and independence, side by side with other free Nations in the world today.

In hope that the people's spirit, the *Sverre-spirit,* will triumph in the present battle, and that someday, either in this lifetime or the next, this spot will be marked by a statue of Sverre that will be a symbol of our spirit, bespeaking a free and independent people, I propose that we give three hurrahs three times . . .

"Long live our spirit!"

The conservative newspaper, Trondheim's *Addresseavis,* made sharp editorial criticism of this address.

". . . he made an address that bespoke fairly good historical knowledge but he drew an unpleasant analogy when he said that the conditions of the civil wars in the twelfth century were the same as conditions at the present time: an autocratic party and a democratic party, pitted one against the other. . . . Nowhere has the kingdom of God and the people's duty to their sovereign been more flagrantly defied than in this address by the radical, Høyem."

Grandfather did not even reply.

He was an incorrigible meddler in smaller matters too. When one of the boys on the Stein farm on Byneset drowned in the fjord one day while out washing his plowhorse, Grandfather wrote a letter to the local paper proposing that the relatives and friends of the drowned boy organize a swimming association for the purpose of teaching every Byne-

set boy how to swim. "For if Erik had known how to swim, he could easily have reached the boat that was anchored near the fishing nets."

He agitated for a law that would require fishing boats to be so constructed that they would not sink if overturned. "We have laws protecting people's health," he wrote; "why can we not have a law protecting people's lives? A man cannot live in many places in this country without a boat. Let us teach him how to build it so he will be safe when he goes out in it."

Laws and regulations relating to salmon fishing absorbed him for years. He thought the Government should take a hand.

How to get milk from Byneset to town without its turning sour in summer or freezing in winter took much of his time. At last he devised a container plated with tin, set in a larger container of wood, with hay or cork cuttings for insulation in between. The farmers laughed at him while he worked on it —people were used to sour or frozen milk—but in the end some used it—and got a better price for their milk. Then others took it up.

In 1876 there was a drought, so there was little feed on Byneset for the dairy stock. Grandfather proposed that the farmers put their herds out for pasturage that winter in sections of the country outside the drought area. "The small expenditure in-

volved in driving the stock twenty or thirty miles would be nothing compared to the loss involved in selling their dying cattle to the butchers in town at a ridiculous price." This proposal did not even amuse the farmers of Byneset. Høyem had some good ideas now and then, they admitted, but sometimes he seemed quite mad. Driving stock twenty or thirty miles from home was unheard of!

Another thing that brought him ridicule and scorn was that he was in favor of women being allowed to become teachers. He actually trained his eldest daughter, Inga, for that, and sent her to a post in the Lofoten Islands when she was through. It was a bitter disappointment to him when the opposition and prejudice she encountered in the community and in the schoolroom sent her to America instead.

And he wanted women doctors, too! Høyem was indeed a strange man.

He opposed military training for country boys in the summer-time. The farmers needed their sons at home in summer!

The railroad tracks should be laid *east* of Trondheim!

There should be more parks, more playgrounds, more schools.

There should be a statue of Olaf Tryggvasson in Trondheim's market place. . . .

The church on Byneset should have an organ, a richer baptismal font. . . .

But the maddest thing of all that he proposed was that the farmers should bathe at least twice a week!

Cleanliness [he wrote in his book for and about Byneset] is not sufficiently observed. Most people wash their faces and hands less than once a week unless they are engaged in work that requires more frequent washing. Who knows but what the common poor eyesight among the older people both on Byneset and in other places is not caused by this sparing use of clean water? . . . Yes, people wash too seldom. What shall one say about those persons who do not wash their bodies more than once or twice a year? Some do it almost never! The skin's pores must surely deteriorate under such treatment. It is a wonder that colds and fevers, not to mention itches and other kinds of skin disease have not been more prevalent than they have. People are more careful now in 1893 than they were when I first spoke of it in my book in 1860, but, even so, I still strongly advise people to care better for their skin and particularly to keep their feet clean and free from old perspiration. For cleanliness is the best means of regulating the body's temperature. . . .

Yes, Grandfather was a busy man.

He sat at home in his house in Ilen by the fjord much of the time during the last two years of his life. He was ill, but he chafed at the confinement. In those two years he revised his collection of Old

Testament tales that he had written in *landsmål,* and worked out a German-*Landsmål* grammar.

He lost his taste for mingling with people at the last and withdrew more and more within himself. A man cannot stand alone forever. If he had had the means to go abroad or seek out circles in Norway where he could find intellectual companionship, he could perhaps have carried on longer than he did. But even in 1893 the "seven little ones" for whom he had in 1881 kept quiet at meetings, traitor to himself, made large demands upon him. By the time they all were grown he was old.

Sometimes the scorn and ridicule that hailed down on him at meetings and in the press in his single-handed fight for new and fresh ideas was almost more than he could bear. The maggot, Doubt, ate at him and made him wonder if what his enemies said about him was true.

One day in 1899 he died.

The newspaper, *Dagsposten,* which at times had been the only one intelligently sympathetic with his character, carried this editorial the day of his burial:

Høyem was an unusual man. There are not many to be found in our land who have shown such tireless initiative as he. His energy and persistence to hang on, to do what he had set out to do, was unique.

He was a versatile, many-sided man. If, in the foundation period of his life, he had received a training of corresponding high character, he would have gone far. But he became obliged, through his environment, to sail in narrow channels and he never went beyond a teachers' training course. He came to settle down in a town where for many years he was denied recognition. His best intentions and his most earnest proposals were suspected and resisted, and he himself was treated like the town fool—a comic book for a snobbish, heartless group of narrow, thwarted souls.

All this, in time, cast its blight. Not only was he denied an opportunity to find a wider horizon and his powers strengthened, but gradually the ceaseless scorn and ridicule and heartlessness had a deteriorating effect. No plant can grow strong without some sun. No spirit can stay bright without some warming recognition.

So Høyem became bitter, or rather, suspicious—always expecting a rebuff, an injustice, a disappointment, even when none was intended. He spoke with unnecessary brusqueness; his voice took on a rasping quality.

But his heart, at bottom, remained the same. Those who knew him well could always bring his warm smile out, and he stood always ready to aid some good cause. . . .

A good Norwegian is dead.

After he died, the tide slowly changed. As his neighbors began to recall things he had said and done, they began to pay his memory homage.

Now there is a street named for him.

Jonetta and Tass had indeed taken good care of me. For a week I had done little but read and rest and take long walks. Uncle Hallfred had come and gone, hurriedly, restlessly, apparently engrossed in engineering problems and insurance indemnities, and yet it seemed to me with the air of an unsatisfied, unadjusted, unengrossed soul. He laughed at my interest in Grandfather's affairs but still, in his eyes, I thought I saw a question as to what I had found. He wanted to understand Grandfather, but the social conditioning of a business world prevented him from doing so. He had never been awakened to Grandfather's social ideals.

"I don't see why Father didn't go into something else when he lost his position in the bank," he said one day, "instead of fooling around as he did making the bank give him a letter of recommendation and finally give him his job back. He could have made much more money elsewhere!"

I could imagine Grandfather's response:

"My son, my son! Don't you know what it is to fight for the principle of the thing?"

He who quits a fight in which a principle is concerned, may flee far, but he will go nowhere.

At nine Uncle Hallfred would come from his daily three hours with the *dreng* in the garden and cow barn and we would have the Norwegian breakfast of oatmeal and still warm milk, bread, cheese, cold

ham or sausage, and coffee. Then he would drive downtown to his office.

At eleven Jonetta would bring me a tray of tea or coffee with cakes. (Norwegian maids make much better coffee than tea.) At three-thirty Uncle Hallfred would be home for dinner and we would have sausage with mashed potato, and a hot fruit soup for dessert. Or we might have fried fresh herring with boiled potatoes. One day we had a large boiled whitefish and Uncle Hallfred showed me where to find the most delectable part of it—a little sac of fat in the head. He spread it on a piece of *flatbrød* for me. I tasted it—and tasted nothing.

"Nothing? Ah, it is very delicate, that's why you think you don't taste it. Here, try again!"

One day he asked me if I noted any great difference between the food in Norway and America. I thought of the food eaten in America—by the South Carolina sharecropper, the retired California business man, the Northwest lumberman, the Italian in New York. . . . I said I *believed* that, on the whole, we ate more vegetables.

From that day on, we had string beans in a thick white sauce every day for dinner!

After dinner always came the siesta. Even Uncle Hallfred suspended his nervous activity long enough to lie down on the lounge in his living room. But promptly at four, if not sooner, he was up again—

telephoning, shouting orders to the *dreng* in the garden, and telling Jonetta to hurry with the coffee.

For most Norwegian business men, the day ends at three. But Uncle Hallfred had been in America and got some "push," and he returned to the office at four-thirty. It was after seven before he was back and we sat down to the light supper called *kveldsmat,* which, except for the oatmeal, is identical with breakfast everywhere in the country, every day.

In the light evenings, after *kveldsmat,* Tass would take me walking along the dirt roads running through Lade i Strinda. He lay beside me all day in the living room, and when we first set out his old legs and paws would be stiff and sore. Sometimes we would stroll through the ancient site of the first Christian church in Norway and where, in the present structure, Grandfather had once been the parochial schoolteacher. I wondered just where the pagan altar had been, and how the people looked who had gathered here two thousand years ago to sacrifice a white heifer so that the gods would make their wives, their stock, and their fields fruitful.

Sometimes we would walk the opposite way, past other "villas," none of which were so pretentious as Rognli. Occasionally we would encounter a farmer on the road driving a small stocky horse, with a long forelock hanging in its eyes, harnessed to a two-wheeled cart.

Over the plowed field alongside the road, the gulls would be tracing their sweeping arcs, crying their creaky, worried cries as they rose and ceasing as they settled. When we came back it would still be light in the birch-tree lane that led from the dirt road of Strinda to Rognli.

It was Sunday. Uncle Hallfred was preparing to drive to Oslo to bring back his wife, my Aunt Asbjørg, who had been attending the festivities in connection with an engineering convention which Uncle Hallfred had not had time to attend. It was eleven in the morning and Uncle Hallfred had called Jonetta and the *dreng* into the living room and seated them on Grandfather's settee in the rear of the room to listen in on the church services beginning to come over the air. I had a chair further forward in the room.

Jonetta should have had time off to go to church, Uncle Hallfred had told me, but the cow with the infected udder still needed attention every hour so he could not spare Jonetta. She and the *dreng* would have to attend services by radio.

The sonorous tones of organ and Lutheran hymns began filling my ears, generating even in this sunny living room the lethargic dull fatigue I always felt in church.

"Uncle," I whispered as he tiptoed through the

room, preparing for his journey, "do I *have* to listen? I mean, do I *have* to stay for church?"

"Shhhh. . . . Yes, yes, you must." He glanced toward the servants in a way that told me it was my duty, always, to observe decorum. One always went to church and sent one's servants—unless, of course, one was too busy or could not spare the servants.

When he was ready, he gave my shoulder a little shake for farewell, and stopped to whisper final orders to the *dreng*. A moment later we heard the motor of the automobile grow fainter and fainter down the birch-tree lane.

We sat, the servants and I, through the long sermon. But being pious for the servants' sake was a wearing job. The words, without my own experience to give them life, were meaningless. The minister who spoke them seemed spiritless. He was a preserver of the status quo and no more.

Uncle Hallfred would be gone until Tuesday. He would reach Oslo tonight, stopping only on Dovre at four to make himself some coffee and eat the lunch Jonetta had put up for him. Uncle Hallfred was a wealthy man, but in Norway one always takes one's own lunch along when traveling, regardless of one's means. And if one's way lies across Dovre one always stops and makes coffee before descending to the lowlands. Monday evening, on the trip home from Oslo, Uncle Hallfred and Aunt Asbjørg would

visit Uncle Brage in Lillehammer. The two brothers had not met since Uncle Brage had been made archdeacon. Uncle Hallfred was always so very, very busy and the big house at Rognli was always so full that he never lacked an excuse for his seeming neglect.

It was nine o'clock on Tuesday evening when Tass bounded up from his box in the living room and demanded I open the door. The family was back. And with them was Aunt Signy!

Jonetta came running down the back stairs to make coffee. Tass leaped about in a manner rather unseemly for one of his age.

They had missed Uncle Brage. Aunt Lilla's sister from Italy had been the only one at the Rectory when they got there, for Uncle Brage and Aunt Lilla had just departed for their cottage in the mountains. They had got Uncle Hallfred's wire he was coming, but it was too late—their bags had already gone to the station.

We sat down around the coffee table—Aunt Asbjørg, Aunt Signy, Uncle Hallfred, and I. Aunt Signy and he were in rapid repartee in old Byneset dialect. Aunt Asbjørg looked at them and was not amused. But there was an imp at work in little old Aunt Signy and Uncle Hallfred was responding.

There were three weddings planned in the family

for that month. The first one was Rolf's on Saturday. Preparations had been going on for months and the invitations had been sent out several weeks ago. It was to be in the cathedral at six.

Aunt Signy and I planned to go and look on.

"You *must* see a wedding in the cathedral," she and Uncle Hallfred said.

I had been to the cathedral one morning while on a walk with Tass, though he had deserted me when we reached town. I wandered around in its dim chill for more than an hour. And one evening I had gone to High Mass with my blonde, blue-eyed cousins upon the occasion of the opening of the newly completed eastern section of the nave, and had listened with chattering teeth while the bishop told its history. All the cold of that glacier-scarred country seemed to have settled in the stones of its cathedral, just as the rise and fall of Norway's fortune had a determining influence on the progress of its building. My feet as we sat there during the sermon, seemed to lose all feeling, and my chest ached from the chill. People about me remarked, "Yes, the church is perhaps a little cold today," and their red noses and blue lips testified to the truth of their observation.

The cathedral was at its height in beauty, the bishop said, at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The first four hundred years after Christianity

had been introduced were years of peace. The nation prospered and construction went steadily on. Then corruption and destruction set in, Norway was ravaged by Sweden and Denmark, and its cathedral nearly ruined. Even St. Olaf's silver casket, prime relic of the place, was removed to Denmark, where it was recast into a pair of silver lions to adorn the entrance to a royal castle. The Cathedral served the Swedish invaders as a horse stable.

In 1814, the spirit of the people made itself effectively felt again. The Cathedral became a national symbol, and its completion a goal identified with the achievement of nationhood.

Now, at last, the eastern part of the nave had been completed. Blocks of stone still lay outside and scaffolding still stood beside the walls, for there remained a great deal of work to do. During the services, the stonecutters sat in the foremost pews, and the bishop addressed himself mainly to them. Some of them, old men with granite features, sat side by side with sons, their successors in the trade. They had spent their lifetime laying the slow, fitted courses of the eastern nave; their sons would be topping these with others like them, when they were gone, building gray patient walls, heavy with glacial cold, another generation toward heaven.

Aunt Marianna, Uncle Jakob's second wife, was with us. Her cold bearing relaxed enough to say,

after we had wandered through the old and new sections and stood outside to view the east façade:

"You haven't got anything like this in all America!"

A little before six the wedding guests were ready. Uncle Hallfred's round merry face looked rounder and merrier than ever beneath his high silk hat. He wore "tails." Aunt Asbjørg wore blue lace and Britannica-Hotel set hair.

Rolf and his bride stood a long time before the lofty altar, a myriad of candles lighting its dark depths. They looked Lilliputian before it and the minister's words were lost in the vast space. The wedding guests in the first rows sat without moving and the hundred or so of spectators that always assemble to see a wedding in the cathedral fought against their impulse to cough and shiver.

When the exhortation ended, the minister lifted his hand for the pronouncement and when it ended, the magnificent organ burst forth.

When the last pastel gown had floated by, Aunt Signy and I followed with the other spectators. Outside, Uncle Hallfred was waiting for us. I could see the pain in his face as he looked at Aunt Signy, for she had not been invited to the wedding feast that was to follow. I felt he was groping desperately in his mind for something to say that would ease the embarrassment.

"Aunt Signy," I said, "I really feel so chilled, I think I may be getting ill. Can't we go to some *konditeri* and get something hot to drink?"

Aunt Signy looked at me in immediate concern. Uncle Hallfred and I exchanged a warm glance of understanding.

We went to one of the fashionable *konditeri* a few blocks from the cathedral and ordered cakes and coffee.

The *konditeri* in Norway corresponds to the café in France, insofar as it is a place to pass the time away, but there is nothing of the lively gaiety—no animated conversations, no lax or lazy good humor in the Norwegian *konditeri*. Here there is a decorous hush, a prim sipping of coffee, chocolate or tea. Only in Oslo, at the Grand Hotel, is there something of the flavor of the French café.

The next morning, Uncle Hallfred observed the old custom in Norway of serving his guests their first cup of Sunday breakfast coffee in bed. Jonetta appeared with two gleaming trays at nine, and a little later Uncle Hallfred himself came in and had a cup with us. He brought the songs the wedding guests had composed, as custom is, for the bride and groom. They had been printed and now Uncle Hallfred unrolled them and sang them for us. His tone was true and pleasant.

This custom of composing songs for such occa-

sions as confirmations, birthdays and weddings is no doubt a remnant of the ancient skaldic culture. In the days of the skalds, before the advent of written literature, to be able to compose a poem, or song, was about the cultural equivalent in our day of having a college education.* The best skalds, the ones whose songs were remembered, were, of course, the finest artists. And everyone, even today, is willing to *try* composing a song, or writing a poem.

The second wedding was to be the next day and this time Aunt Signy was invited to the feast. Her face was burning when she left the telephone to which the bride's mother had called her.

"They are inviting me because they think I expect it," she said bitterly to me.

"And don't you?"

She looked at me at first without answering. Then she began to smile.

"Of course I do," she said.

The problem now was what Aunt Signy should wear. She had brought her "new" black dress, the one that could be worn either side out, but the question was what she should find for "decoration."

She appealed to me.

"Do you think this yellow flower is better than this old white one?" She held two faded hat flowers against her shoulder in careful appraisal.

* See Theodore Jorgensen, *History of Norwegian Literature.*

When we had settled this, there was the problem of pressing her dress.

"Would you—would you see to it for me?" Then she came closer and lowered her voice so that Aunt Asbjørg, who was sitting at her loom in the living room below, should be sure not to overhear: "I am so afraid of her!"

At last everyone was ready for the festival. In the kitchen, before they left, I had found an extra cup of coffee for Aunt Signy. She was examining herself in a mirror on the wall.

"How ugly I am!" she exclaimed. She sank into a chair, exhausted from trying to adjust her hat to her satisfaction.

"Aunt," I said sternly, "you know very well it doesn't matter what you wear. Clothes don't count!"

"Child," she replied in the same voice, "you know you are lying!"

I was longing to go to Byneset. Back to the old farms there and to my earliest beginnings. . . .

But first I must spend a few days with Aunt Marianna. Also, the cottages on Byneset had to be put in order before they would be habitable. No one had been out there yet this summer and the winter chill was no doubt still in them. More firewood would have to be cut, and the mattresses and bolsters would have to be aired and dried in the sun.

Aunt Asbjørg said she would go out and attend to it all on the first sunny day.

"Oh, I suppose nothing will come of it," Aunt Signy said. "She'll never get to Byneset—"

Signy was not afraid of Asbjørg when she was championing me.

"Aunt Signy," I said afterwards, "will you please stop trying to take care of me? I understand Aunt Asbjørg very well."

Aunt Signy's blue eyes slowly filled with tears as she stood looking up at me from her crumpled height. In her hand she had a cigarette that she had slipped out of Uncle Hallfred's smoking cabinet for me. She knew I was not smoking out of deference to my kin's feeling that it is poor taste for women to smoke.

"But don't you see? I need to have someone to take care of!"

She laid the cigarette on the table and went out.

I felt ashamed. I determined to take Aunt Signy with me to Byneset.

Uncle Jakob had died four years ago and now Aunt Marianna lived alone there with her daughter and her stepdaughter in the gray-and-white frame house in Singsaker, close by the grounds of Norway's Technical University.

It was hard to persuade Aunt Signy that I would

be able to board the bus by old Lade Church, some rods down the dirt road below Rognli, transfer to a Singsaker streetcar downtown and reach Aunt Marianna's house alone. She stood on the steps at Rognli a long time watching me walk down the birch-tree lane.

The bus route from Lade to Trondheim goes through Trondheim's "slum area." I had traveled it many times. Once I had walked it. I had come back to Rognli one evening after a walk to town and exclaimed to Uncle Hallfred about the charm and cleanliness of the little streets along the waterfront below Lade. I spoke admiringly of the coziness of the section—the plants in the windows, the white curtains, the neat back yards.

"But I want to see the slums too," I said. "Where are the slums of Trondheim?"

"Those *are* the slums of Trondheim. That section is the poorest we have."

"What?"

"It's true. Yes, we take care of our people."

There was an unctuousness in his tone that made me wonder if it were not the people who took care of themselves. I doubted if paternalism such as his tone suggested, could provide such uniformly good conditions.

The principal streets in Trondheim are wide and light. Munke Gate, that runs from the cathedral

doors to the fjord and is lined with large white frame buildings, is almost brilliant in summer as the light from sky and water is radiated from the glossy white-painted walls of the buildings. One of these frame structures is the Trondheim royal residence. The royal family is frequently in Trondheim, for royal baptisms and weddings are always held in Trondheim Cathedral. Coronation ceremonies, too, are held there.

Uncle Jakob had gone to America in 1886. He was the eldest of Grandfather's sons, but to Grandfather's dismay, Jakob did not like to study. He preferred action, out-of-doors, to the quiet of the schoolroom. It was a bitter disappointment to his father, who wanted his eldest son to be one of the great ones in the land. Aunt Signy had told me of the bitter conflict between them, father and son. When suasion failed, Grandfather tried force. He tried to *make* him study. There were beatings in the old house in Ilen, bitter clashes of powerful wills. Uncle Jakob *would* not cry out. Grandfather felt he must make him do so, make him bow to *his* will. Uncle Jakob would not. He pressed his mouth tight shut and stood, his face white, before his father. His sisters, huddled fearfully on the bed in the next room, were the only ones who cried—until afterward. Then, when Grandfather had gone out, baffled and miser-

able, Uncle Jakob would run to Grandmother and bury his face in her arms.

Finally, when Jakob was twenty, Grandfather let him go his way. Jakob went to sea one day in March. After some months he wrote that he had left the ship to settle in America.

Norwegian emigrants those days were all settling in the Northwest. The valleys in south-central Montana drew young Jakob. The day he arrived in the little town to which his ticket carried him, he went suitcase in hand to the saloon that stood against the boardwalk of the single street, and waited there beside the bar until someone hired him. He did not take a drink. Soon he was on his way in a lumber wagon to the Sweet Grass hills—to herd sheep. O. J. Høyem's eldest son, who was to have been a political leader and statesman, got a job herding sheep on Montana plains!

It suited Jakob: the immense green stretches of rolling grazing land, the dull gray sea of backs before him. . . .

And the money he could earn and save! In a few years' time he had enough to buy sheep of his own. He filed a claim on land, too, and before long he was established on a fine tract near the river, not far from Dead Man's Gulch.

He worked hard. He built a dam in the Gulch

and piped water to his house. He broke ground in neat rectangular plots—like the fields of Norway, though in extent unlike fields anywhere he had heard of in the world. He built a white frame house. At right angles to it he built a storehouse. He planted a *tun* tree. The stables he placed beyond....

He thrived.

When everything was ready, and there was money in the bank, he returned to Trondheim to find Anthonie. He found her and they returned together. She brought with her many things for the house at the foot of Dead Man's Gulch—a large silver tureen, numberless little silver coffee spoons. . . .

When she bore their third child, Anthonie—or Tonette, as Jakob called her—bled to death. There was no doctor within miles.

They never told Jakob—the women who attended her. They were afraid he could not stand it. That the life in America which he loved so, had killed Tonette—no, he must never know.

It was best, perhaps, to take the children back home to Norway, he thought. Tonette's friend, Marianna, would care for them awhile, perhaps.... And Tonette would go back with them. Jakob would not leave her alone on the green hillside. He bought the finest coffin he could find and enclosed it himself in a rough box of pine boards.

Marianna did care for the three children—the

twins, Astri and Olaf, and the baby, little Tony. And in a year, Jakob and she were married, and they all went home to Dead Man's Gulch in Montana.

Jakob continued to thrive. His flocks of sheep grew. His broad acres widened. His was the best ranch in the valley.

But there was a difference. Marianna did not love this new, raw land. To her it was a mighty mire that would certainly, surely, suck them all down. The long table filled with perspiring men from the hayfield or the shearing corral for whom she had to cook night and day, the pools of manure water left on the floor by their shoes, the flies—against all these things her being rebelled. Everything was so *big* here. She could not keep her house clean—there was too much else to do. She could not sing and read with the children—there was not time. And there was no church, no school, no concerts. What if they *were* becoming wealthy in America? It was not home. One did not *live* here. . . .

"You have nothing like this in all America," Aunt Marianna had said to me outside the cathedral one evening.

No, for Aunt Marianna there was nothing of the spirit of the cathedral in the newly plowed acres or the bands of sheep being slowly herded across the vaulting ridges, nothing of the spirit of Brahms in

the wind that swept out of Dead Man's Gulch on a bitter winter's day.

For there was nothing of the spirit of the pioneer in Marianna.

So Jakob Høyem sold his ranch and he and the twins and Marianna and the new babies returned home to Norway. Little Tony was left alone on the green slope above the house. She had died when she was three.

The gate at Aunt Marianna's house in Singsaker was difficult to open. There was an odd and original lock on it, one that was concealed from the eye. The maid saw me struggling with it from her window in the kitchen and came out and let me in. Herr Høyem, she said, had devised that lock one day. There was no other like it in town, she said.

Aunt Marianna and my two cousins, with some of the colleagues in the professions, were waiting for me in the garden behind the house. A supper table with large flat plates of *smorbrød*—the inevitable open-faced sandwiches—stood ready.

In the distance, below us, lay the fjord. It was filled with steamers, and with motorboats and other coastwise craft, for there is no railroad along the western coast of Norway, and Trondheim Port is a busy one. Numerous little boats ply the arms of the fjord between different parts of the town. Seaward, ten minutes distant by motorboat, lay Munk-

holmen, the little isle that had been fortified against the Danes and Swedes and where the swindler Griffenfeldt had been imprisoned for eighteen years. His cell and the path his feet had worn in the concrete were objects of tourist interest.

During supper I learned that my cousins were all followers of Frank Buchman's Oxford Group; that the current issue in the newspapers was whether or not women should be allowed to become preachers; and that the reason American tourists were disliked in Norway was because they talked and laughed so loudly!

When the guests had gone, I asked about Uncle Jakob. Had he been happy here in Norway at last?

He had bought a farm, they told me, at Malvik, not far from Trondheim. He had built it to resemble exactly the farm at Dead Man's Gulch—the house, the barns, everything was as similar as he could make it.

He tried to run it in the American manner too. He imported farm machinery bought from Montgomery Ward and taught his *dreng* to pitch hay onto a wagon in the field instead of dragging it over the ground or carrying it on their backs. He used mowers instead of scythes, rakes instead of drying racks. He gave his *dreng* three meals a day instead of four or five. He had brought sheep with him from America too, and meant to breed a band of thoroughbreds

here, but they had all died. The climate was not right. He brought alfalfa seed with him and tried to introduce alfalfa to Norway, but it would not grow. None of the things he tried succeeded.

But Marianna was happier. She could *live* again.

At last Uncle Jakob got sick with a "nervous disorder." He became forgetful and began to labor under the hallucination that he was back herding sheep in Montana, and the next moment he would be overheard saying that little Tony ought to be brought back here where her mother was.

It was thought best he should retire. He sold his farm at Malvik and built a gray-and-white frame house in Singsaker. They set a chair for him by the window overlooking the fjord.

He converted the basement into a workshop for himself. For was there not a great deal to do, keeping a house in order? Putting screens on in spring, storm windows on in fall? And he would make a lock for that front gate, he said, that no one could open who had not been shown how.

And he took long walks—to the cathedral mostly. Here he would sit for hours gazing through the dim light at the carved intricacies in the stone. Sometimes he would walk clear to Byneset and sit in the little church, or beside his father's grave, gazing out over the fields that his people for generations before him had tilled.

He died of the brooding inaction in a few years—unrealized, unexhausted, unfulfilled.

One morning when I had been at Aunt Marianna's about a week, Aunt Signy called. She curtsied to Aunt Marianna when she entered the room. She had come to tell me, she said, that the cottage on Byneset was ready. Aunt Asbjørg had been out the day before to open it up, and this morning Uncle Hallfred had sent out a load of supplies. She, Aunt Signy, was ready to go. Was I?

We had dinner at Aunt Marianna's—boiled sausage, mashed potato, *flatbrød,* and for dessert, hot rhubarb soup. We would have coffee at Rognli.

"Why do you curtsy to Aunt Marianna, Aunt Signy?" I asked as we were walking down the hill to the streetcar line.

"To show my respect . . . and, I don't know . . . Aunt Marianna is so—formal."

"My silly Aunt Signy. Don't you see why she is so—'formal' as you say? Besides, Marianna is your sister. Why should you curtsy—"

"I wish you would leave me alone or go back to America where you came from! I had made my peace with the world before you came, and now you come probing into my life and ask me why I do so and so. I was content . . ."

"You mean you had resigned yourself to thinking that you *were* less than they because you had

dared, in your youth, to be true to yourself. In your heart, you *know* you should not curtsy to your sister. . . ."

"Oh, child, I am so tired!"

The streetcar was coming around the corner and we boarded it for Rognli.

It was a clear, cool day when we set out at last for Byneset—Uncle Hallfred, Aunt Asbjørg, two cousins, Aunt Signy, and I—in Uncle Hallfred's old Chevrolet. It was only an hour's drive; but an hour's drive in Norway—a thirty-mile journey—is a real excursion, attended with preparations, mental and physical, that a day's journey would involve in the States.

At my feet in the car were additional stores of food, canned and dried, that Aunt Asbjørg had put up for us: fish pudding that could be fried or heated in a white sauce, canned meatballs ("boneless birds," they were called in Norwegian), dried apples and apricots, a block of goat's-milk cheese, packaged *flatbrød,* and a large tin of coffee with an envelope of fish-skin attached. The fish-skin, cut into tiny squares, was for clearing the coffee.

The road followed the fjord for ten miles or so, weaving in and out along the water's edge, a sheer cliff-wall on the left. At every turn, Aunt Asbjørg would exclaim in fear.

"What if we had met a car right there?" she would say. Norwegians are not wholly accustomed to motor travel yet.

"You should live in New York for a while. There you have a constant stream of cars beside you—"

"Well, at least you *know* they are there, then," she said.

When the road left the fjord, it entered a region of fertile fields and low rolling ridges, broken here and there by bogs of peat. The black humus, cut into bricks, was piled at the edge of the fields, or lay spread out to dry. The farmers on Byneset use peat in their kitchen stoves and their cylindrical living-room heaters.

Soon we were there at Hallfred Stua and its little annex, Dukka Stua (Doll House)—two summer cottages, all that remained of an ancient family's *gård.*

No road led to them. We left the car on the *tun* of the nearest farm on the hillside and took a little path that passed a cage of silver foxes, divided a field of turnips from a field of verdant barley, turned finally into a field of timothy, and then—entered a grove of birches.

I had never seen such a dense stand of birches. They stood silvery pale and straight; close-set ranks penetrated only by the little ax-hewn path. A light wind was blowing in from the fjord and the topmost branches swayed and whispered.

"A member of the family?" "A distant member of the family?" "From afar?" "A distant member of the family from afar?" "A distant member of the family from afar . . ."

The word passed quickly among them. They leaned and swayed, one toward another, whispering, in the wind from the fjord. I passed slowly along the path between their quivering files.

The windows of the little cottage we were to share—Aunt Signy and I—stood open. Aunt Asbjørg had left them that way the day before to let the freshening breeze blow through the little rooms. They swung outward; their white sashes were outlined primly, squarely against the red of the frame cottage. The roof was of sod, and from its slope bluebells and tall green grasses nodded down to us, as we approached. On one corner of the roof a tiny conifer had sprouted, and had already settled itself to grow with the hardiness that characterizes the species everywhere.

Aunt Asbjørg unlocked the door with an enormous key and we entered.

Everything was in miniature. The *kjøkken-benk,* or stationary worktable, with enclosed shelves below, that stands beneath the window in every Norwegian kitchen, was less than half the size of "kitchen benches" elsewhere; and the window itself, the stove, and the utensils, were in proportion.

In the other room were two wooden beds, excruciatingly short, their frames fixed to the wall at the head and inner side, supported at the free corner by rough posts. A long deal table under the light from two little windows stood in an opposite corner. The floors were whitely scrubbed, the beds were whitely mounded, and a white embroidered scarf lay on the kitchen bench. A bright brass coffeepot hung waiting on the stove.

It was eleven o'clock. In a few minutes Aunt Asbjørg had a birchwood fire going in Hallfred Stua, which stood a few yards nearer the fjord. Here, too, the floors were scrubbed according to tradition of Norwegian people, and the coffeepot brightly polished.

Aunt Asbjørg had brought coffee bread with her from Rognli and soon we were sitting down to our mid-morning relaxation.

"*Vi koser oss mere her i landet, ikke sandt?* (We have it cozier here in this country, don't we?)" Uncle Hallfred said to me.

"Yes," I agreed, the simple coffee bread before me, the thin half-filled cup of coffee at my hand, the easy atmosphere all around us, the cottage in the country such as nearly every Norwegian of even moderate means has. "Yes, we live better here, somehow."

After they had gone and Aunt Signy and I were

alone we began unpacking our provisions and arranging them in the kitchen cupboard of our Dukka Stua. Aunt Signy, moving from cupboard to stove, and from the washstand to the water pail beside the door, seemed uniquely to belong in this tiny cottage. It was just her size.

That evening, after we had had our supper and tidied up our kitchen, we donned shawls and went to sit on a wooden seat at the farther edge of the clearing before our cottage door. There we had an almost unobstructed view of the fjord with only a few treetops that rose from the lower terrain between us and the water to pierce its restful blue.

We sat a long time in the light cool evening. All around us was a constant chorus of crying gulls that wove and rewove above the water and the great gray boulders that clustered along the fjord.

When at last we retired, the inshore breeze had revived. I fell asleep listening to the whispering of the birches.

"Now," Aunt Signy announced next morning when we awoke, "we are not going to be idle while we are here. I am going to embroider and you are going to study."

"First," I said, "we are going to have some coffee. You stay in bed now while I start the fire and get

some going. Then you can get up and lay your plans."

I disregarded her protest that she, not I, should make the fire, and ran down to the woodshed below Hallfred Stua to look for chips. When I got back a bright fire was going. Aunt Signy had ripped some bark off a birch stick or two she had and now she was standing in triumph in the middle of the room, laughing at me.

The days and weeks that followed were filled with the sights, sounds, smells and feel of a land and climate that had gone into the blood of my people for centuries. The rise and fall of the fjord, with its smell of salt when the tide was in and its peculiar tang of slack, wet seaweed when it was out; the odor of hay drying on the long upright wire racks in the fields; the maze of blue and yellow and green and white and rose flowers that grew so thick it was impossible to walk without stepping on them; the dull drizzle of rain that threw a gray veil over us for days at a time; the smell and crackle of birchwood in the stoves and the exhilarating odor of its smoke; the feel of the soft, dark water of the fjord on my body; the swoop of complaining gulls; the small fishing boats silently undulating on the fjord's surface; the relentless hardness of the white rock after a swim; the silent white moon; the glistening drip of the birches. . . . I felt at home.

One day the local newspaper, which I got each morning from a mailbox when I went up to the farm on the hill for our daily pail of milk, announced there was an elk loose on Byneset. It was alone—evidently it had come down from some of the uninhabited ridges inland—and it was mad, the paper said. It had killed two cows on a neighboring farm, and the paper gave warning that all stock should be kept indoors until it had been captured. Field workers were asked to keep a sharp lookout.

From that day on until we heard the elk had left the section and disappeared, Aunt Signy would not go outdoors without first bidding me an elaborate adieu, and when I went out alone she *was* a little worried.

"What if we should wake up some morning and see the elk there with its head sticking in at the window?" she said, making her eyes large and round.

But I think her real purpose in saying this was to frighten me into not opening the window quite so much when we retired. I knew, of course, that night air was bad for one, didn't I?

Aunt Signy sat and slept more than the Norwegians of old did, I believe. The displacement in a hip, caused by her faulty posture as she sat in school, and later as she sat embroidering in the long years that followed, prevented her from lying com-

fortably in bed, no matter how many pillows she assembled under her shoulders. After an hour or two, she would sit up and, her chin upon her breast, sleep fitfully, until at last she sank back on the pillows.

"Besides," she said, "it's so lonely to lie on one's back alone."

She slept in her chair during the day, too. The plan was that I should read aloud for several hours every day to improve my diction; and, exactly at the time we had set for beginning, she would hand me my book and install herself on the edge of her high bed, her elbows on her knees and her feet swinging, prepared to listen and correct.

In less than five minutes she would be asleep, her head bowed upon her breast. But if I paused, she would awaken with a start, and we would resume as if nothing had happened. Soon she would be asleep again.

Her embroidering went not much faster. She had been sewing for an Oslo firm for more than forty years; and while she did not need to sew for her living any longer, she was lost without the work, though the State doctor who visited the Home warned her it was bad for her to sit and sew so much.

Here on Byneset, however, where she had run

and played along the little stream and beside the fjord in summer-time when she was little, embroidery did not interest her.

"Today I must not be so lazy," she would say. "I'll never get this finished in the time it has to be if I don't work hard on it every day!"

But the long light days were somehow too, too short. After the first cup of coffee in the morning, which Aunt Signy allowed me at last to bring to her bed, it was so easy and pleasant to have another—"just one other little tear"—and lie back a little longer. By the time I'd fetched the milk and she had cooked the gruel, it would be noon. The morning would be past—and no embroidery done!

After breakfast, there were the floors to scrub. No good Norwegian peasant can start the day before the floors are scrubbed. I would wield the brush and Aunt Signy would stand by with the pail of green soap—a substance that looked like heavy syrup which one lifted from the pail with one's fingertips and which made the floors absolutely spotless and almost white.

And when the cottage was shining and fragrant from the clean, drying floor and the spruce needles I had spread on it as my ancestors before me had done, we would have to complete the sensuous ecstasy of our impressions by adding the aroma of a pot of fresh coffee, and sitting down to sip it dreamily when it was made.

It would be late afternoon before we got around to frying the fish pudding and cooking a potato. (One day when I creamed the pudding instead, Aunt Signy was scandalized to see me use potato flour for thickening. "Potato flour is for fine desserts, my child. How can you—a Høyem—be so wasteful?")

Every other day I would walk the quarter-mile or so to the consumers' co-operative general store on the hill above the fjord. A son of one of my great-uncles was the manager. It was twenty years since the farmers of Byneset, lacking a convenient store, had banded together and started one. They borrowed fifteen hundred dollars from the bank Grandfather had started, over the personal signature of three or four of them, and began to do business. In two or three years they had repaid the original capital, and now, with a membership of two hundred, they regularly distributed at least a five-per-cent rebate to their members. Fertilizer and feed were the store's principal wares, but the place stocked everything from the dark, heavy bread which we bought there, to silks and satins, shoes and cheese, bolts and pins—all neatly shelved in a little white frame building.

"Frugality—habitual frugality," the manager whom I called "Uncle," replied one day when I asked him what it was in the Norwegians that made their co-operative ventures successful. Then he

added, "I suppose if the movement succeeds in America, it will be for different reasons. Isn't that right?"

After my first visit to the store, the word went quickly around the neighborhood that a Høyem from America was at the Hallfred Stua annex. Frequently, in the afternoons, after that, Aunt Signy and I would receive callers—third cousins, fourth cousins, great-aunts, great-aunts by marriage. . . .

Aunt Signy would always apologize as they entered for the unkempt condition of our cottage, while I, stiff and lame from scrubbing and polishing, would look at her in amazement, and even with a trace of indignation. Once, when a group including a venerable old lady of eighty arrived, Aunt Signy met them outdoors and told them we simply could not ask them in because our house was in disorder! They insisted it was all right and came in anyway.

When they had gone, I asked Aunt Signy with some feeling of irritation why she said our house was not in order.

"It's the custom, child. It's a mark of respect to the callers to say your place is not worthy of their call."

I subsided, and soon I was myself making ritual apologies for the dirt and squalor in which we dwelt, though I ached with the fatigue of cleaning.

For the second Sunday of our stay, services were scheduled in the ancient stone church that stood opposite our cottage beyond an arm of shallow water that pierced the barley field above us. In the evening, its black-tarred, steeply pitched roof and light walls with tiny Gothic windows stood out sharply against the layered gold and cobalt of the sky.

I knew from Grandfather's writings that this little church was the most remarkable, though not the oldest, relic of antiquity on Byneset. It was built partly of fieldstone and partly of hewn potstone that had no doubt been taken from the same deposits as had the stone for the cathedral in Trondheim. It stood on a ledge of stone, too, that sloped down to the fjord, between cliffs and birch-clad hills. As Grandfather wrote in 1863: "From early spring until late autumn, there was birdsong there from all the many kinds of birds in the leafy trees on the hills around, as well as from the hundreds of starlings that, year after year, whistled and piped under the rounded, red tiles on the steep roof which lets the birds in all the better for having rid itself of not a few fragments here and there. And the odor of flowers from the rich, grassy valleys and hillsides all around, clear to the very church walls, is as balsamic sweet as from a heavenly garden."

The church is built in the usual fashion of these

ancient structures, with chancel facing the east and the spire rising over the western wall. It is Gothic throughout. Hewn potstone forms the first course in the massive wall and corners of the building and frames the doors and windows. There are traces, here and there around the doors, of carving in the stone.

The exact age of the church is unknown, but it is believed to have been built in Olaf Tryggvasson's time. It is certainly one of the oldest stone churches in Norway, and closely resembles the Lade Church, the first Christian temple built to replace the pagan sacrificial altar of the chieftain Håkon. It seems reasonable to suppose that it was built by Orm Lyrja, an enemy of Håkon's and a friend of Olaf Tryggvasson's, who followed his friend's example and built a Christian church here on the rocky ledge where he, Orm Lyrja, lived, on the site of a pagan altar.

The site of the church is also known from Sverre's saga as the place where he, Sverre, sent a band of his *Birkebein,* followers from the ranks of "little men," to encounter the powerful King Magnus Erlingsson. King Magnus in the spring of 1180 had pulled in here with his entire fleet and had come ashore with an escort to bathe in the mineral waters that bubbled up a short distance inland. Sverre sent his followers to drive him out and kill him if they could. The *Birkebein* concealed themselves among

willows that grew densely along an ancient watercourse descending to the fjord, and when the opportunity came they attacked King Magnus and the group who had come ashore with him. Magnus' men were killed but Magnus himself got back aboard and prepared to give battle. But now the *Birkebein* withdrew, for they knew certainly they would only lose in a battle with Magnus' hundred ships and more than ten thousand men.

The mineral spring that had tempted King Magnus to disembark in rebellious territory had continued to flow on the hill above the church until sometime in the seventeenth century when the Swedes destroyed it by "stopping it up with lead," as part of their long attempt to subdue the stubborn and tenacious Norwegians. The course of its current was changed and lost, though on the west side of the hill the terrain is wet and boggy.

In the valleys of the vicinity and along the strands of the fjords there had once been many sepulchral mounds. The last of them were leveled off about 1850. Here and there a little ridge remains to mark off a hollow. Once, the remains of some shrouds had been found—fine to the touch as the sand on the beach! Stripes and strange designs were here and there discernible, though nothing like the native runes. The shrouds belonged, men thought, to the Stone Age.

The old church on Byneset holds ages of history. In 1293 Archbishop Jorrund diverted its income away to other use. In 1303 the Pope made him return it. Its income, or its allotted part of it, was its own then until 1536, when the Catholics were ousted and the income divided between Church and Crown. In 1720, the Danish king, Frederick IV, took not only the Church's share of the income from Byneset but the church building itself as well, with all its contents, and sold it at auction to provide himself with a baptismal font of gold and silver for use in royal baptisms in Copenhagen. For nearly a century Byneset Church, like all the neighboring churches, was the property of private landlords, from whom the people had to rent them. "Oh, what a gross injustice to the people!" wrote Grandfather.

In 1803 the peasants were able to buy back their church, as well as the two farms, or *gårds,* that went with it—Lovoset and Høyem, or Høiem.

So little gray St. Mikael's Church, as it was called in 1252, has endured much from fate. Yet it stands just as solidly today as it did in Sverre's time, nine centuries ago.

The round-arched windows are few and small. In about 1820 the leaden panes were changed for stained glass and reset one-third of the way through the thick wall instead of flush with the outside surface. In earliest days there had been two doors open-

ing on the nave, but in 1810 one was walled up. There is a story in this connection about an old patriarch who, attending church one Sabbath soon after the doorway had been sealed, walked in anger straight into the wall of stone, and said, "I want to go the way I have always gone!"

The altar is of hewn stone, and inlaid in it, is a little square of white marble which had been either a little portable altar, *altare portatile,* which the priests and preachers used in their visits to the parishioners, or a kissing stone or peace tablet—or maybe both. There was a custom once of exchanging the kiss of peace in church, and as occasionally some disagreeableness resulted when certain worshipers kissed others, a kissing stone was provided especially for the ceremony.

The altarpiece is an old, old carving in wood, its figures and parts appearing from the church floor like a large tree growing from a sturdy root.

The pulpit is decorated in the same style and kind of carving. In its panels are portrayed the four evangelists with their symbols, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as a reminder that from the pulpit come the words that shall save the listeners.

The entire interior of the church was once decorated with wood carving of this sort but most of it was removed in the nineteenth century.

Until about 1800 there had been an ancient in-

cense burner, but it disappeared; and the baptismal font from olden days had never been found. Grandfather, shocked by the use of an old tin-plated basin, brought two rich old brass ones back into use that had been in the church since Catholic times, and himself bought a suitable font for them.

There were two chandeliers—the one in the chancel bore the inscription, "Anno 1794, given for the beautification of Bynes Church by Isak Høyem, parish clerk, and Maria Høyem." In the chancel, beside the altar, is a pine chest from Catholic times holding a very old beaker of silver and the silver bread plate. Underneath the chancel floor are ancient crypts.

Outside, stretching east and west are headstones dating from the seventeenth century to the present. One from the sixteenth century, dated 1536, is inscribed in Latin, "Here lies Synneve, the good peasant N's wife. Say a pater noster for her soul, O Mary!"

I would have to attend the services in old Byneset Church. I was on a pilgrimage to the soil of my fathers and I would have to lend myself to the symbols of their spirit, their age. . . .

Aunt Signy would be unable to go. She could not walk so far.

A score of bicycles leaned against the buildings

of the *prestegård,* or pastor's farm, that lay a few rods to the right of the wooden churchyard gate. One or two horses hitched to one-seated, two-wheeled carts stood on the *prestegård tun.* There was one automobile and many bicycles.

I was late. I could hear the sound of the little organ's breathing from the tiny windows in the thick gray wall.

As I stepped into the old weapon room, the hush peculiar to High Mass enfolded me. I opened the second door carefully and tiptoed quickly to a seat. On the right of the middle aisle sat the men; on the other side, the women. A red-cheeked woman moved to give me room, and everyone down the row moved with her. I felt their eyes imperceptibly upon me. "The Høyem from America," I felt them think. I became conscious of my light tweed suit and brilliant scarf. I wished I were in black as they were.

The candles on the altar burned palely against the carved altarpiece, and the candles in the chandelier that Isak Høyem and his wife, Maria, gave in 1794 threw their pale yellow warmth on the pastor's white and crimson garments. The organ, played by Axel Høyem, another great-uncle's son, whose *gård* lay north of Dukka Stua, and installed by Great-uncle Oluf, who had been parish clerk, resounded through the nave. I saw Axel's white head.

Beyond him, on the other side of the organ, sat the present *klokkar,* or parish clerk, who lived on the *klokkargård,* where Grandfather and Great-grandfather before him had been born.

The pastor who stood in the carven pulpit where Grandfather's brother, the deacon, Ivar Høyem, had stood and preached and who lived on the *gård* just beyond the old church wall where Ivar too had lived, spoke feelingly and well, but his words floated past me, and I heard instead the nearer voices of my ancestors. In this dim interior where I sat they had marked the milestones of their lives: baptism, confirmation, Communion, marriage, and death. Above the present pastor's voice, I heard the intonations of pastors before him who had performed the rites in my people's past. In a quick glance around to the choir in the rear, I had seen their portraits—the portraits of all the pastors of Byneset Church as far back as portraits of them could be found. I felt their eyes.

When the sermon was over and the organ tones had died away for the last time, and the parish clerk had read the articles of faith and bowed his head as the ancient bell began slowly to toll twelve, I pressed forward through the outgoing congregation to the chancel to stand a moment alone by the baptismal font Grandfather had provided. . . .

On the chancel wall, above the chair for the parish

clerk, hung my great-grandfather's portrait. His eyes looked sharply through me. I saw no frenzy in them now but only purpose—perhaps idealism.

The bicycles and carts and the lone automobile were gone when I emerged and walked slowly around the church to the plot of ground that, on the very edge of the ledge which held the church above the dark-watered fjord, was the family burial plot.

Grandfather had bought this burial place just outside the chancel door and close by the churchyard wall, in 1892. It had not been easy to secure it, for the archdeacon of the diocese had opposed him, but in the end he won. It was so peaceful there, he had said, and, best of all, the view was so unhindered. From no other spot in the churchyard could one get such a clear and unobstructed view of the fjord and its opening to the sea!

I unlatched the little iron gate and stepped inside. . . .

A simple gravel mound lay to the right. At one end, facing the sea, rose a plain column hewn from potstone. Grandfather had wished it so. Beside him, Grandmother. At his feet, Uncle Jakob. Beside him, Great-uncle Ivar. The rest of the plot was empty—waiting. "Ol' Jakobsso' " and his sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters, lay in the churchyard proper.

Uncle Brage had said he wanted the place beside Grandmother.

"I'll take the outer corner," Aunt Signy had said. ("A bit outside, you know," she observed one day to me.) Uncle Hallfred, the three sisters in America —there was room for them all. "And for any of their descendants who might return to the cradle of their fathers," Grandfather had said.

I sat down for a few minutes on the low stone wall that bordered the plot and gazed out over the water, watching the dipping fishing boats and the flapping gulls, and thinking how my blood, my bones had been going into this earth so many years. And how, in the valley to the left where even now some willows grew, the *Birkebein*—the "little men"—had given their blood, too. They also were my people—the *Birkebein:* "little people" who through struggle won freedom for themselves.

The third wedding in the family was to take place at the end of the week in Lade Church. Aunt Marianna, whose youngest son's wedding it was, and the fair-haired Svanhild came out to Dukka Stua for coffee one day to urge Aunt Signy and me to come. Besides, the bride and groom were to begin their honeymoon in Dukka Stua. We would have to vacate.

"But I can't leave Byneset yet!" I cried, after they

had gone. "I haven't been to Halogård-Mule and I want to stay a day or two at Solnedglad!"

Solnedglad was *landsmål* for "Sun Glides Down," the name of the estate where "Uncle" Halvdan lived, half a mile from his store. It adjoined the old Høyem estate, now occupied, as in years past, by the parish clerk and his family.

We scrubbed the floor especially white the day we left and spread it thickly with fragrant juniper. Then we laid thick green boughs of juniper and spruce outside the door for the bridal pair to step on as they entered. Juniper underfoot brought happiness.

They came for Aunt Signy. I remained. I would return to Rognli by bus in a day or two, I promised.

For two days I was feted royally. "Uncle" Halvdan's wife's strong arms (she was a cousin to Senator Norbeck of North Dakota—also a *Birkebein*) baked stacks of delicious *lefse* for me, and plied me with luscious coffee breads, rich with eggs and cream. In the evenings, their sons, ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-two, and all of them employees of the co-operative enterprises—bakeries and general merchandise stores—between Byneset and Trondheim, gathered in the western-facing dining room at Solnedglad, questioning me about America and telling me about the work and festivities in their co-operative associations. There was soon to be a large

annual meeting on Byneset, with speeches, music, and *smorgasbord.*

There I heard also about my Great-uncle Hjalmar, who had been writing propaganda for co-operatives for years. He was now publishing a newspaper in Nordland, and once he had been in prison for his zeal.

In the afternoons I visited other relatives the length and breadth of Byneset. Always my hostess would declare her house unfit as she ushered me into the plush-upholstered, doily-bedecked "first parlor," used only on the extraordinary occasions, where nothing was ever out of its appointed place and where the walls were literally covered with family photographs. It was unthinkable for them to let me go before I had coffee with them, and something to eat. When at last I protested that I could eat no more, they contented themselves with pressing an orange on me. Surely I could eat an orange! (The oranges always came, as at Aunt Lilla's, from a locked corner cupboard.)

At last I boarded the bus for Trondheim. It took me rapidly past peat fields and meticulously kept, prosperous farms with their co-operative establishments. When we entered Trondheim, the route led through O. J. Høyem Street. I saw the house Grandfather had built when his eldest daughter was three,

and I passed beneath the shade of trees he had planted.

It was my last night in Trondheim. The family was planning to gather that evening at the home of a cousin—Uncle Brage's son—who was pastor in a community an hour's ride from Trondheim. Uncle Brage and Aunt Lilla would be there too, on their way to Lillehammer from their cottage in the mountains.

It would be the long-postponed, long-delayed meeting of the brothers.

The parish farm on which my cousin dwelt lay beyond stretches of fjord, where salmon fishers were hauling in their nets for the weekly two-day period when salmon-fishing is not allowed.

Turning, we climbed among stands of tall conifers. At times we suddenly dipped to the shore of a lake, then smoothly ascended into the forests again.

We drew up—Uncle Hallfred, Aunt Asbjørg, Aunt Signy and I. Gustav, my cousin, came to meet us. He seemed young to be a pastor. His face had an ascetic touch, his bearing was delicate and fine, with more of Aunt Lilla's sensitiveness than Uncle Brage's stalwart strength. In America, now, he would be a musician or a poet, or an instructor in English literature.

The family had gathered around the foot-high hearth on which birchwood burned brightly. There was no suggestion of postponed visits or delayed meetings in the greetings all around. Norway is a small country. People learn to get along. And when food and wine, intelligently used, had done their work, I saw evidence of the strong affection and abiding loyalty that lay deeper by far than social irritations.

Platters of triangular, open-faced sandwiches—riots of color and form. When would I taste them again?

And afterwards, around the birchwood fire, the delicate little coffee cups, the cheer, the grace, the mellow calm of old carved cupboards. . . . When would I feel them again?

Uncle Brage, benevolent and content; Uncle Hallfred, the business man who was impelled by his peasant blood, his love of the soil, to work a farm in his spare moments; Aunt Lilla, whose fine reserve she was content to let be called shyness; Aunt Asbjørg, who had economic power; Aunt Signy, who sat in the shadow behind Uncle Brage's back, her elbows on her knees, and smiling to herself. . . . When would I see them all again?

The warmth I felt for them all made me wish, more than ever, that they were not the conservatives that they were. My cousin, Gustav, too was shel-

tered by Uncle Brage's broad shadow and the gains of the generation before him.

"Have you lived in London?" I asked him. His English was English.

"No, I learned it in school," he said.

When we started back for Rognli, the brightest moon I had ever seen in Norway went before us, lighted us on. Uncle Hallfred and I sang "Yankee Doodle" and "Old Black Joe" as we drove back—songs Uncle Hallfred had learned in the log-cabin schoolhouse below Dead Man's Gulch where, staying with Uncle Jakob, he had gone one year to learn more English. Aunt Signy slept.

I sat down for dinner at Rognli for the last time. Aunt Asbjørg had just taken me on a tour through the banquet room, showing me her silver, her porcelain, her glassware, the massive chandelier.

Aunt Signy came in just as we concluded the tour.

"Have you showed her all your possessions, now?" she asked.

Aunt Signy was incorrigible!

For dinner we had *laks,* or salmon—choicest of viands, for Norway's salmon is nearly all exported. With it we had haute sauterne. They drank my happiness, one by one. Uncle Hallfred drank with me twice—once to thank me for the visit.

And then the siesta! When, in New York, would

I ever have a siesta every afternoon? Then the coffee.

At last I stood on the deck of the steamer that was to take me down the rugged western coast to Bergen. My aunts and uncle stood arm-in-arm on the deck-level pier.

I watched, as the shore receded. Uncle Hallfred waved his hat, Aunt Asbjørg her white handkerchief, and Aunt Signy lifted one hand at intervals in a gesture that was both a blessing and a salute.

Presently I lost them—perhaps forever—in the blur of the shore line that now was part of the past.

Down the coast—the island-dotted, cliff-fringed, fjord-invaded coast of Norway. Not far south of Trondelagen the Romsdal heights begin—Romsdal, where my first known ancestor, nearly three hundred years ago, had "drunk himself out of both estate and mayoralty." How far inland had that been, I wondered? In Romsdal, too, were the Trolltindene, the mountain range that, sullen and gray, cast from its peaks its own deep shadows on itself, like the brooding souls its barriers bred. They can be glimpsed from the fjord and even in late July the snowfields lie deep on their treacherous slopes.

Amid the Trolltindene is Romsdalhorn, its head thrown back and chest outthrust, looking like an enormous seal rising from some hidden ocean. Across its back is flung a blanket of snow.

When a vessel passes very near the black cliff shore, one can see from its deck the myriad of gulls that nest in the face of the cliffs. They seem to sit and nest on infinitesimal projections, heads cocked, necks askew, wisps of brown seaweed projecting from beneath them. Sometimes a half-dozen or so crowd upon a minute ledge; others brood singly in hidden recesses. And no matter how many there are on the cliff wall, there are always hundreds more circling around the boat, dipping, wheeling, spiraling, diving, or lying serene on the water's undulant surface.

Below Romsdal the cliff is broken by inlets that pierce the coast—lashing tongues of the sea forcing their way between sheer mountain walls, and darting in and out between promontories of projecting gray. Sometimes one can glimpse distant waterfalls that look like narrow white ribbons, and others that are turbulent floods plunging to lose themselves in the fjords.

Far, far inland is Jotunheimen, which in July is white with encrusted snow that invites the racing ski.

As the ship steams southward, its black smoke rolled in a spreading cloud astern, the coast line dwindles in height and ruggedness, and square, white-painted houses begin to appear. They stand close to the water's edge, and broad-bottomed boats

are tied to their crooked, neighboring piers. Little islands, scattered close to the shore, harbor other white houses with warm red-tiled roofs and shining, smiling, small-paned windows.

By the time the steamer reaches Bergen, Nature has tamed. The land is no longer savage and sullen. It is mellow now, and beckons graciously to the traveler along its coast.

I did not stand on deck to watch Norway's shores fade from my view as the big new New York-bound liner began to pulse and throb beneath me at Bergen's pier. I was not leaving it all behind me. I had its essence with me. Those roots that had lain dormant for so long, unrecognized, were functioning again, and, however they would have to reach and strain, they would find nourishment now. The earth they had lain in had been frozen in the ice of another tongue, another culture; but now the ice had melted, the earth had thawed.

In my imagination I saw again the ranch on Deer Creek in Montana. Once again I sat on the hill above the house and looked down on the verdant little dale and the buildings resting there. The low log house, the grassy *tun,* the lofty cedar *tun* tree (I had not known the tradition behind these things when the ranch was "home"), the meticulous garden rows of blue-green cabbage and raspy-leaved turnip, the field of waving timothy, the large red

barn. In the hush of evening, I heard the dull clang of a cowbell from the corral as the bell-cow swung her head against her side to fight tormenting flies.

Through openings in the stand of cottonwoods along the creek I could see the log schoolhouse that Father and Mother had built for us. For there had been five of us—and no school within a dozen miles!

And I saw Father come driving a team of fine, black horses. Father always had fine horses with well-shaped heads and bodies, and he always had a black team for the buggy. I saw him draw them sharply to a halt beside the driveway gate.

And I saw Mother's anguish. . . .

Father, drunk with power; Mother, worn with work. His spirit wasted by lack of direction and control, her culture lost in the wasteland of an exploitative society.

Heredity and environment. By an exploration of them both, I, and Americans like me, might hope to find ourselves.

It was a wide circle I had made—from Deer Creek in Montana to Byneset in *Birkeland.* I hoped it had not been *just* a circle. I hoped it had been a spiral—a spiral in understanding.

And now—New York.

THE END